TALKS ON TRUTH

THOMAS HUGHES, S.J.

EX LIBRIS
252.4
H874
SOCIETATIS
VERBI DIVINI
Techny, Ill.

The Catholic
Theological Union
LIBRARY
Chicago, Ill.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/talksontruthfort0000thom

TALKS ON TRUTH

Nihil obstat

ARTHUR J. SCANLAN, S. T. D.,
Censor Librorum

Imprimatur

✠ PATRICK J. HAYES, D.D.,
Archbishop, New York

TALKS ON TRUTH

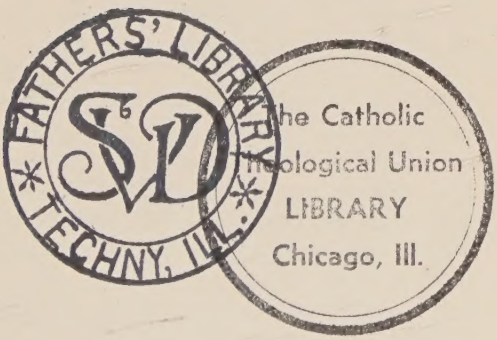
FOR

TEACHERS AND THINKERS

WITHDRAWN

BY

THOMAS HUGHES
OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS



LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.
39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON, E.C. 4
NEW YORK, TORONTO
BOMBAY, CALCUTTA AND MADRAS
1923

24
10157

COPYRIGHT, 1923
BY THOMAS HUGHES, S. J.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES

CONDÉ NAST PRESS, GREENWICH, CONN., U. S. A.

To

BENJAMIN

Since you asked many questions on the ways of the Lord, desiring the answers to be set out in short readings, I have endeavoured to satisfy you. I have selected some matters of fact, and certain speculations, from the wide field of Truth.

One subject, which is both speculative and practical, leads the way; that is, Prayer, or the converse of our soul with its Creator. Then come other topics, such as Truth itself, which is so many-sided in its relations; and especially Religion, the history of which is so singular for aberrations from truth in theory and practice.

I should be glad, if what satisfies you as a reminder served also as a partial guide for our excellent teaching bodies, whose pupils in modern conditions are so glibly assailed with strange ideas on religion and science. It is in view of such modern thought that I have formulated here some of the tests which reason and faith supply, to fix the value of many notions current. To make room for such criticism I have enlarged the scope of your queries, when attaching my answers to them.

The shorter the reading, the better seasoned should it be. Hence I have drawn freely on Holy Writ to give relish, to add substance, and to solicit your esteem and preference for the voice of Wisdom speaking. "Let Thy Scriptures, O Lord," says St. Augustine, "be my chaste delight!" For indeed, as St. John Chrysostom observes, they are a flowery meadow of thought, yea, a paradise of luscious fruit.

As to the rendering of the sacred text, you may bear in mind that it is only the Vulgate in Latin, and not the phrasing of any translation published in English, which has been authenticated by the Church for the purpose of quotation. And, as to the labours of others, I have not only assigned the credit to where it is due for many fair thoughts impressed into service here, but also, in discarding opinions of another sort, I have taken pains to leave them at the doors of those who claim them.

So, using that freedom of conversation to which your questions and objections invited, we may retrace in these pages our steps as on an evening stroll, the dialogue winding with the turns of many topics over the fields of many thoughts.

THE AUTHOR

Rome,
May 31, 1923

CONTENTS

CHAPTER PAGE

PRAYER

Introduction 3
I. The Rational Instinct to Pray . . 5
II. The Privilege of Prayer 12
III. The Law of Prayer 23
IV. The Kingdom and Public Worship . 32
V. Classes of Men: Conditions of Prayer 37

TRUTH

VI. Mental Prayer 49
VII. Contemplation 69
VIII. Beauty and Truth 94
IX. Truth and Doubt 111
X. Truth at an Angle 132
XI. Facts 149
XII. Pragmatism 156
XIII. Mentality, Divers Degrees 173
XIV. Mentality, Other Degrees 187

RELIGION

XV. The Question 209
XVI. Sentiment 220
XVII. Imagination 250
XVIII. Our Lord and Imagination 275
XIX. Rationalism and Naturalism . . . 296
XX. Good Faith 340
XXI. The Fact and Definition of Religion 362
XXII. Definitions and Notions 394
Index 409

PRAYER

INTRODUCTION

Prayer is the practice of intercourse with God. The root of it is the understanding of our relations with Him. The fruit of it is all that is useful in this life which is, and in the other which is to come.

Substantially it consists in the elevation of the soul within. But it must go beyond that to make itself complete and perfect. So prayer formulates itself in words. Still more pronounced, it performs acts of reverence. Words and acts are an outward expression of the sentiment within, and give a natural enlargement to the spirit of man; "for with the heart we believe unto justice, but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." [1] Thus prayer develops into the full system of religion practised outwardly, or of public worship.

A threefold momentum impels us to address God in prayer. There is the rational instinct which prompts it. There is the privilege which allows it. There is the law which enjoins it.

[1] Rom. 10. 10.

TALKS ON TRUTH

Chapter I

THE RATIONAL INSTINCT TO PRAY

The impulse to pray comes from our rational nature, and, like every other impulse which merits the name of instinct, it rather possesses us than we possess it. In fact it is the impulse to feel for a strong hand held out from above, when our arm falls helpless by our side; to fill the emptiness, of which we are conscious, with a fulness which is not our own. In shipwreck, on the brink of the precipice, in the deafening explosion, they who before thought that they knew not God become suddenly enlightened and find themselves religious. An old proverb in divers tongues has it: "He that would learn how to pray, let him go to sea." It was only in the days of their abundance, and of the foolishness which went with their license, that people had said, there was no God.[1] Now, in fire, in water, in lightning and storm, it comes like a revelation of themselves to find that they had thirsted for Him all the time: "For Thee my soul hath thirsted, for Thee my flesh, O how many ways! in a desert land, and where there is no way and no water."[2] The soul finds itself in feeling for Him, whom it had ever been groping for, even when least anxious to find Him. Let a sagging existence be braced up by the jerk of terror or horror, and forthwith the instinct of intelligent nature vibrates through the frame. The truth latent for years springs out to light in the intensity of the moment. Thus the Sceptic Pyrrho, whose philosophy

[1] Ps. 13. 1; 52. 1.

[2] *Ibid.* 62. 2, 3.

had reached the fine point of idealism that fact and fancy were all one, and nothing mattered since all things were alike unreal, happened to find himself once in presence of a mad dog, which made for him. His idealism deserted him on the spot. Common sense rushed to the front. He turned and ran. Afterwards he apologized for the intrusive instinct, saying, "'Tis hard to put off nature!"

* * *

This contrast, between notions which presume to dispense with realities and the instinct of common sense which so promptly apprehends them, invites us to explain more precisely what it is that comes under the name of Prayer.

Taken in a large sense, it is little less than the whole virtue of religion in exercise; and so it comprises whatever helps the mind to rise towards God. Meditation, contemplation, are exercises of prayer; also conning over sacred things, reading about matters of the spirit, or entering into oneself before God. Whatever goes to foster the devotion which comes of understanding may be reckoned as prayer: "My heart grew hot within me, and in my meditation a fire shall kindle. I said with my tongue: O Lord make known to me my end, and what is the number of my days, that I may know what is wanting to me."[1]

In a more restricted sense, prayer is only a direct address to God by adoration, thanksgiving, reparation, or petition.

But in the narrowest sense it is the last-named form alone, that of petition or impetration, which has appropriated to itself the title of prayer.

All this, especially public prayer, is otherwise

[1] Ps. 38. 4, 5.

called Worship; and the virtue of justice or righteousness which animates it is called Religion. This is the great virtue, first of all the moral ones, which makes us refer ourselves and all that concerns us to God, with reverence for His person and deference to His will.

Many virtues concur to the discharge of this divine duty. It is the heart's devotion which prompts religious worship. Faith and hope accompany it: "If any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all men abundantly, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering."[1] Moreover, religious worship is sustained by that spirit of humility or sincerity, which is the truth of our life shining through our conduct—"doing the truth," as Our Lord said to Nicodemus, and "coming to the light."[2]

* * *

Under whatever form it is made, prayer is so ready to one's hand and near to the heart that it is instinctive; which means, that it proceeds from an obvious principle of the mind, and that it comes natural in the conduct of our moral existence. The practical principle of reason which dictates the duty of prayer is so clear in life that to fail in the observance of it is inexcusable, and withal impossible. It is a default inexcusable, because, as St. Paul says, the invisible things of God are understood by the things that are made; so that even the heathens, who had only the guidance of natural intelligence, were "without excuse," when "knowing God they glorified Him not as God, nor gave thanks." And withal it was a default quite impossible, as they showed by the necessity to which they

[1] James 1. 5, 6. [2] John 3. 21.

submitted of still worshipping something, though they committed the folly of glorifying the wrong things.[1] Glorifying God means having the right knowledge of Him, and making to Him the acknowledgments due to a Person.

There is a certain kind of knowledge, in fact there are several exercises of the intellectual life, which might seem to coincide with the meditation and contemplation of prayer. Man's mind will always insist on speculating about himself—whence he came, and whither he goes: the fact, the cause, the end. Such exercises of our intelligence may seem not to be far from the kingdom of God. However, to have a religious value in them and the sterling stamp of royalty on them, such thoughts and meditations must comprise a reference to the Person who is "the incorruptible God," [2] and must show reverence to Him who is the king of heaven and earth.

This relation to a Person, who knows and wills and governs and lays down a law, is so essential in moral life, that it is the cause of merit and demerit, of the virtuous act and of the vicious one, or sin. It makes the virtuous soul meritorious of a blissful eternity in God, and the vicious soul liable to rejection forever from His sight. Prayer is evidently an exercise that has such a personal bearing; for it is an address to Him, whom to know, says the Wise Man, "is perfect justice"; and, he continues, "to know Thy justice and Thy power is the root of immortality." [3]

We could never acknowledge as just, nor appeal to as mighty, any nebulous entity—a damp cloud, for instance, or a fiery ether, or any other of the products, which some airy theories have substituted for God. If any of these are put up in place of the

[1] Rom. 1. 20–23. [2] *Ibid.* v. 23. [3] Wisd. 15. 3.

personal reality, no prayer can be directed upwards or downwards to such phantasies—no more, nay much less than to any stock or stone, to any Mercury or Jove, or to any other mask that has ever been devised for disguising the Personality of God.

Without this practical relationship to a real Person, all intellectual speculation, which includes no reference of oneself to God, is but an abstract philosophy, or some natural science musing in a speculative mood. It has none of the practical good sense which is the light of life. Nor is it the divine philosophy which is brought home to the mass of mankind only through the teaching of religion.

* * *

And yet it is scarcely possible that any body live without praying somehow. If he himself will not, his nature will refer itself to God some way or other. We are too empty not to float upwards. "All my bones shall say: Lord, who is like to Thee?" [1] Our whole being is living by His gift. Our thought and sense and motive power are of His making. Their preservation is the making of them continued from moment to moment; and the whole course of existence is but the original creation maintained and reaffirmed. Like the crows or the lion's cubs, which ask,[2] receive, and honour Him by just being as He keeps them, so the whole course of our life is a testimony to His thoughtful Providence, whence it all flowed out by a free act of love divine, and whither it yearns to flow back, repaying with love in kind. As

> . . . The bright firmament
> Shootes forth no flame
> So silent, but is eloquent
> In speaking the Creator's name,

[1] Ps. 34. 10. [2] *Ibid.* 146. 9.

our energies likewise may seem to work silently, our talents and eloquence may even suppress His name, but all alike are really wafting incense to God. "All my bones shall say: Lord, who is like to Thee?" This is the kind of speech which issues from the evidence of the thing; as the evidence of Abel's blood was a "voice" crying from earth to heaven.[1]

We find some one making verses and praying that he may not have to pray:

> O Master of this night of Spring,
> Make firm in me a heart too brave
> To ask Thee anything!

This must mean: Put me under no such obligations! I would fain need nothing! But that could only mean: Make me nothing! For, if we are anything at all, it is a great crying necessity we are, with our tentacles out on all sides, the body calling for sustenance, the mind for light, innocence for virtue, sanctity for endurance; the soul craving to be delivered from death, the eyes from tears, and the feet from stumbling.[2]

Of course, a prayer made up against praying, like the one just cited, is not religious at all, nor reasonable, discounting as it does the cause, course and end of existence. It runs perilously near that passage of Holy Writ, which reports a challenge to God's Providence, and an insult to His Person: "Depart from us! we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways. Who is the Almighty that we should serve Him? and what doth it profit us if we pray to Him?" In the same place it is noted that they who say so "spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to hell." [3]

Others too we have seen who did not pray in the

[1] Gen. 4. 10. [2] Ps. 114. 8. [3] Job 21. 13–15.

right way. The swineherds of Gadara were a sample. Their prayer to Christ was that He would please pass on, and leave them alone. They had already lost their swine. Now they desired to lose Him too. He assented, and passed on. But neither was this an act of religious virtue, to resign the grace of His presence, and claim no privilege from His mercy.

Chapter II

THE PRIVILEGE OF PRAYER

A PRIVILEGE! It is a gracious thing that a weak creature should be able to stand up and talk with its Creator. "Now I have taken upon me to speak unto my Lord," exclaimed Abraham; "whereas," said he, "I am but dust and ashes!" [1] It is a fragrant thing that our wishes should be allowed to rise like incense, and circle round the throne of the Most High. This is a franchise accorded to us, a power granted; which, however, is included in the original grant to us of a mind and will, of a head and heart. For we took high rank from the first in the right of our living, immortal soul; and so we have the right to move about freely in the spiritual world, where the Father is worshipped in spirit and in truth.[2]

This right to hold intercourse with God is a power laid up in us; just as it is said in general that we have a "power," or right, or privilege, "to become children of God." [3] The use of such a power to pray is left in the hands of our free will. It can be used, or remain unused, or be dropped disused, just as we please.

Properly speaking, it cannot be abused, since it is the exercise of a virtue, called Religion; and no one can be said to abuse a virtue, *qua nemo male utitur;* since it would then cease to be a virtue and become a vice. In the matter of religion, the vice would be a superstition of some kind, worshipping the true God in a false way, or worshipping a false god in any

[1] Gen. 18. 27. [2] John 4. 24. [3] John 1. 12.

way. And, as all virtues eschew the extremes of too much or too little, religion to be a virtue must keep within its own bounds, immune from the excesses of superstition on one side, and the defect of irreligiousness on the other.

* * *

It is true that the semblance or mask of a virtue can be put on by dubious claimants to relationship. So we saw above that the exercise of prayer was taken off in a kind of imitation by the versifier who prayed against praying, and by the Gadarene swineherds who prayed God to pass on and leave them alone. So too the Pharisee, whom Our Lord described as praying in the temple, made a bad delivery of his mental and moral gifts, when he stood up before all, and seemed to be in perfect form; but really he was only putting on style and airs, to exhibit himself as a model of holiness. He ran down his neighbours as unholy, and he patronized God with an invitation to look at him and admire him.[1] The Lord signified that the Pharisee was none the better for his prayer. The psalmist intimates that a man may be much the worse for a prayer dictated or influenced by presumption, hatred or despair: "Let his prayer be turned into sin."[2] This is an abuse of what might be a virtue. It is a subtle exercise of vice exploiting virtue for its own uses.

The exercise of our privilege is genuine when the mind and heart, indulging in reverent reflection on the truths of time and eternity, expand into acts of adoration, thanksgiving, reparation, and particularly of petition to God. This last petitionary form of prayer is what our Lord inculcated, when He said: "Ask, and it shall be given you"; and it is so press-

[1] Luke 18. 11. [2] Ps. 108. 7.

ing that the Apostle would have it permeate all other forms of mental elevation: "In every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God." [1]

Models are not wanting. Thus the psalmist runs into a prayer, crying out for rescue: "O God, come to my assistance; O Lord, make haste to help me. Let them be confounded and ashamed that seek my soul." [2] Hear King Ezechias praying: "O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, who sittest upon the cherubim, Thou alone art the God of all the kingdoms of the earth; Thou hast made heaven and earth. Incline, O Lord, Thy ear, and hear; open, O Lord, Thy eyes, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he hath sent to blaspheme the living God." [3] Or listen to Daniel blandly coaxing: "It is not for our justifications that we present our prayers before Thy face, but for the multitude of Thy tender mercies. O Lord hear; O Lord, be appeased; hearken and do; delay not for Thy own sake, O my God, because Thy name is invoked upon Thy city and upon Thy people." [4] Then there is insinuation, like that of the two sisters: "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." [5] He came a long way to answer that short prayer; and He went a long way in answering it, even so far as to raise Lazarus from the dead. It was under the pressure of such prayer that God asked Moses to leave Him alone, and let the wrath of justice have its due.[6] One night Jacob would not let the Lord go, except at the cost of a certain blessing. The sun rose, and the blessing was given.[7]

* * *

We are a privileged class. Privilege implies something special, something out of the ordinary. Like

[1] Phil. 4. 6. [2] Ps. 69. 2, 3. [3] Isai. 37. 16, 17. [4] Dan. 9. 18, 19.
[5] John 11. 3. [6] Exod. 32. 10. [7] Gen. 32. 26–29.

the great people who are privileged to enter society at a certain age, and who qualify themselves by observing certain formalities and an etiquette, so are we permitted to enter into God's society; and that from the very beginning, without other etiquette than respect and confidence. We are granted a civic status, which the Apostle tells us is the franchise of heaven.[1]

It is true that the mere application of our mind and heart to prayer is not itself a permanent state of possessing God's gracious countenance and favour in Court. That is called by another name, Grace, and is a stable condition of the soul. It is "the divine nature" imparted, according to His "most great and precious promises." [2] Grace is a positive endowment and permanent state, distinguishing and identifying the soul as God's friend; faintly represented by the purple robe and golden crown, which King Alexander consigned to Jonathan, writing: We have appointed thee to "be called the King's friend . . . and that thou be of one mind with us in our affairs, and keep friendship with us." [3]

Prayer, though not of itself the state of grace, is the means to reach that state, and keep there. Before we attain to the permanent favour of God, prayer is in part the product of a passing favour, or transient grace, which stimulates us to come and to enter into His friendship. To every one, though sunk in sin, His spirit whispers, Come! His Church puts forth her voice at the head of the ways, where the paths diverge; and she saith, Come! [4] The word passes on through holy souls, whose very presence among men is a winning solicitation to

[1] Phil. 3. 20. Civic status: Greek, "*politeuma*"; Latin, "*conversatio*"; a social and civic standing.
[2] 2 Pet. 1. 4. [3] 1 Mach. 10. 20. [4] Prov. 8. 2; 9. 5.

come. "He that thirsteth, let him come!"[1] Uniform in their purpose is the initial impulse or prompting to pray, as a thing introductory; then the admission into favour, as a grace permanent; and, finally drinking of the waters of life, as a joy eternal in the fulness of the Divinity. "Come ye, buy wine and milk without money, and without any price."[2]

The assurance is given us: "Thou shalt weep no more; He will surely have pity on thee; at the voice of thy cry, as soon as He shall hear, He will answer thee."[3] If thou wilt deal out thy bread to the hungry, and bring the needy and harbourless to thy house, and wilt cover the shivering, "then shalt thou call, and the Lord will hear; thou shalt cry, and He will say: Here I am."[4] The internal word of desire will of itself bring Him: "Before they call, I will hear them; while they are yet speaking, I will say: What is it?"[5]

The reason why prayer has such power is because divine Providence, arranging for effects to be produced, arranges also the way, how they shall come about by secondary causes, and what those causes shall be. This is the course of due Process, whereby everything is effected in this world. Nothing leaps up to completeness and perfection and ripeness, however rashly certain hasty and impatient people want to get everything at once, and gather all the golden eggs of the future by ripping up the goose that is to lay them. Things proceed by degrees and by certain ways. The harvest comes from Him; but it comes by means of the seed, and a number of conditions besides. Bread strengtheneth the heart of man;[6] but the man himself must work the bread into being by kneading, raising, baking, and making it.

[1] Apoc. 22. 17. [2] Isai. 55. 1. [3] *Ibid.* 30. 19.
[4] *Ibid.* 58. 7, 9. [5] *Ibid.* (LXX), 65. 24. [6] Ps. 103. 15.

So good things are intended for us; but they are realized through our prayer—which is not a blind performance like the action of our body gravitating to the earth, nor is it one of blank necessity like that of our open eyes, which cannot help seeing the sky. Prayer is an exercise of faculties intelligent and free. It originates in the good will which desires God. It flowers in the sincere mind which addresses Him. And the effect of it is that man stands consciously revealing himself and revealed in the light of the Sun of Justice, our beginning and end, of whom we say at Easter, in the celebration of His rising from the dead: "May everything return to its pristine freshness of life by Him in whom everything took its rise, Our Lord Jesus Christ Thy Son."

* * *

There lies a part of our interest in the privilege—the profits which accrue to us from Prayer. But the exercise is useful also, as drawing out into action the noblest faculties within us, and calling them out into the noblest action of which they are capable. Our memory, understanding and will, having made us, according to the dramatist's description, "infinite in faculties, the paragon of animals," this little infinity, such as it is, presumes to treat in prayer with the absolutely Infinite, to whom it discloses, like a flower opening, the resources of its faculties, and the extent of its powers. In prayer the soul mounts to where God moves; and it breathes in the atmosphere where the Divinity lives. It respires in the sacred circle whereof God is the immediate centre; and it puts forth those acts and habits, which are the soul's highest elevation of being. By faith, hope, charity and religion, it begins to be as it is meant to subsist for evermore. Prayer is pre-

cisely the exercise of religious virtue, animated by faith, hope and charity.

Yet another part of the privilege! There is the exercise of sociability; and that, not with men, but with God. We entertain ourselves with Him. He knows us face to face. We know Him already in part; and we sit with Him in the beauty of peace, and in the tabernacles of confidence, and in wealthy rest.[1]

A great necessity of life is it to be social. We cannot live solitary. It has been said that, for man to live alone, he must be more than a man or less. That is not quite correct. He should have to be only less. For, if he were more, he would be more social and sociable. The highest specimens of humanity, who have seemed to be retiring and reticent, have only been ambitious of a higher sociability than can be had in the crowd. All heaven is the home of companionship in its highest expression, where God has made a society worthy of Himself to enjoy. Before and above all that, He was and is in His own being three in One—the society of the Infinite.

* * *

And here again the profitable issues out of the genial. For, not only does our social happiness rise in standing and grow in degree, according as the objects of our regard and the sharers of our affection are higher, nobler, better, but in general affairs it is understood, that a large number of the best friends is "the finest garniture of life," as Cicero expresses it, "*optima et pulcherrima vitae supellex*." Besides the honour of the thing, our practical interest is deeply engaged. No one is better provided for in life than he who, having many friends, commands

[1] Isai. 32. 18.

thereby their influence, their wealth and culture. Every one is conscious of this as a motive for entering associations, forming parties, classes, castes, acquiring a right to recognize and be recognized. Many people devote themselves to the special art of making friends, "*amicos parare*," as Cicero says in the place just quoted from *De Amicitia*.

Prayer is eminently the play of sociability, not with men but with God, and with those Blessed ones who are now God's intimate friends for evermore. It brings in its train the mutual exchange of grateful offices. On our part, friendship, love and devotion are exhibited towards Him, who is not merely noble and high, but most noble and the Most High. On His part, the infinite treasures which He possesses are placed at our daily disposal, and the interest of His wisdom is enlisted in the service of our little daily life. So did He bid us command Him; He said: "Thus therefore shall you pray . . . Give us this day our daily bread." [1]

Our daily bread, in the private and inner conduct of our affairs, is the whole staff of life, corporal, intellectual, moral, spiritual and mystical. In the outer circle of our relations with others, it is the staff of our maintenance and progress, social, professional and political. In both spheres, not only is good purveyed, but evils, spiritual and temporal, are watched and warded off: "Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil"—from the snare and the pestilence, from the terror by night and the arrow that flies by day, from the business that prowls about in darkness and the destruction which stalks abroad under the noon-day sun.[2]

These are benefits which fall to us through the

[1] Matt. 6. 9; Luke 11. 3.

[2] Ps. 90. 3–6.

beneficent intercourse of prayer. They are themes, as Cowper puts it,

> Exciting oft our gratitude and love,
> While we retrace with memory's pointing wand,
> That calls the past to our exact review,
> The dangers we have 'scaped, the broken snare,
> The disappointed foe, deliverance found
> Unlook'd for, life preserved and peace restored—
> Fruits of omnipotent eternal love!

* * *

So, like our almsgiving, like our charity, mercy and philanthropy, which are appointed parts of God's providence over needy men, prayer too is a means for the execution of God's providence over ourselves and others. It is an administrative function for us to discharge in the management of ourselves and our affairs.

By administration is meant our practical sense and reason at work in disposing and managing things. When others enter into our affairs as agents or colleagues, we discriminate in our manner of dealing with them. With inferiors we take the tone of command, and give orders. With equals, and much more with superiors, we negotiate by persuasion; which may be reinforced by offerings and promises.

Now it is humble persuasion that we use when dealing with God in prayer. We do not spare oblations or promises, such as we know that He likes. Some promises He has drafted for us, to elicit from us the performance of them; as that we be kind and charitable towards all, even to our enemies, and so help to bind society together in love and intercourse: Thus shall you pray, He says: "Forgive us our sins; for we ourselves also forgive every one that is indebted to us." "For, if you will forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will forgive you

also your offences."[1] He has specified very precisely quite a number of kindly duties, as the condition on which He will hear us, the moment we open our mouth.[2] Meanwhile, the devotion of a mind rising to God does not stint the offerings which it makes of thankful acknowledgments or of substantial gifts—all of which are sure to bring us better things, calling for thanksgiving again. "Give to the Most High according to what He hath given to thee. . . . For the Lord maketh recompense and will give thee seven times as much."[3]

He appreciates everything that will bring Him more home to us, and make Himself and His ways more known, with that practical and vital knowledge of ours which in Scripture is called "giving Him glory." His glory is the knowledge of Him, such as the dumb heavens are trying to tell in their inarticulate way. As we are not dumb, but are adepts at telling what we know, He objects to being left unknown in the midst of His own world: "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there be any that understand," by right doctrine, "and seek God" by reverence and obedience.[4] He demurs to being passed by in His own house, as if He were neither Father nor Lord nor worthy of any notice at all: "The son honoureth the father, and the servant his master; if then I be a Father, where is my honour; and if I be a master where is the fear of me? saith the Lord of hosts."[5] He will not tolerate being travestied and seeing His name bartered about among notions and delusions and errors: "I am the Lord, this is My name; I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven things."[6]

[1] Luke 11. 4; Matt. 6. 14. [2] Isai. 58. 6–9. [3] Ecclus. 35. 12, 13.
[4] Ps. 13. 2; 52. 3. [5] Mal. (LXX), 1. 6. [6] Isai. 42. 8.

Therefore do we say: "Hallowed be Thy Name"; and we add: "Thy will be done"; desiring to render each of these services, the sanctification of His Name by worship and the practice of willing obedience, in such a degree of perfection that, if possible, the will of God be accomplished "on earth as it is in heaven." Thus the practice of prayer, while discharging the duty of religion, goes towards fulfilling that of obedience likewise.

Nay, the acts of all virtues may be impressed into the service of prayer, and be engaged by it in divine worship. For, being offered to God, they acquire from the prayer which offers them the merit of a religious aspiration or direction; and in turn they enrich the religiousness of prayer with merits not its own. In this way charity is conceived to become religion; as also purity of life: "Religion clean and undefiled before God and the Father is this—to visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulation, and to keep oneself unspotted from this world." [1] So too liberality becomes religion, when exercised in the service of God; as was the generosity of the widow, when she gave to the temple of God all that she had, two farthings. Obviously any act of such divine virtues as faith, hope and charity, which apprehend God directly, can assume the character of religion; as we see in that last prayer of the wrecked trawler's steward who, throwing himself into the icy surf to be hauled ashore, said: "God is just!"; and, with that testimony of faith and hope on his lips, the old man died—an act as glorious to God's providence as, no doubt, it was salutary to himself.

We may complete this view of prayer, which is such a privilege of our rational nature, by regarding it as a strict duty. Prayer is enjoined by law.

[1] James 1. 27

Chapter III

THE LAW OF PRAYER

Will a man's destiny take care of itself? Will it settle him somewhere for good, without any momentum being added by his own free will, or direction given to it by his understanding? Whither should his existence go? To roll on awhile like a chance wave of this surging time; then break with a little splash on the strand of eternity, and trickle away in silence, or evaporate?

Man is something more than that. He is little less than the angels. He is always a person in the right of a spiritual soul. He is treated as a person by God, no less than by his fellow men. He is always self-possessed, self-containing and contained, distinct from every one else, and subsisting with personal rights and duties. This character of personality is the primary attribute of a man in the world; and it comes of the act by which God made him in a spiritual soul; for this it is which makes him a person with the expectation of his becoming a son: "Is He not thy Father that hath possessed thee, and made thee, and created thee?" [1]

God stands by the consequences of His own act, and treats man as a free person, whom He has left in the hand of his own counsel.[2] He forces man nowhere, neither up nor down, nor to the right or left. "Consider that I have set before thee this day life and good, and on the other hand death and evil; that thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and walk

[1] Deut. 32. 6.

[2] Ecclus. 15. 14.

in His ways, and keep His commandments and ceremonies and judgments; and thou mayest live." [1] "If thou wilt keep the commandments and perform acceptable fidelity for ever, they shall preserve thee. He hath set fire and water before thee; stretch forth thy hand to which thou wilt. Before man is life and death, good and evil; that which he shall choose shall be given him." [2]

Man too stands by the consequences of God's act. He stands erect as a free person, and faces God: "In the day of my trouble I sought God, with my hands by night lifted up over against Him; and I was not deceived." [3] In time and eternity they are always two persons, God and man over against one another. This makes union possible, when there are two persons to be united. The glory of the lesser, who remains himself, consists in assuming the splendours of the greater—by "fearing" Him, as the Old Testament speaks; by "loving" Him, as the New says. The human spirit is to become one with Him, who shall Himself be its "reward exceeding great"; [4] and, in the union of intelligence, it grows into likeness: "We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is." [5] In the fire iron becomes fire, though it remains iron. Such is our prospective destiny; and all our duties and rights inure to the benefit of that.

* * *

Duties come before rights, and are the origin of them. If you have a right of way in the street, it is because you have to go somewhere. If a ship enters or leaves port, it is because she is bound for a destination. For that reason she demands not to be interfered with by mines and torpedoes, or she will never

[1] Deut. 30. 15, 16. [2] Ecclus. 15. 16–18. [3] Ps. (LXX), 76. 3.
[4] Gen. 15. 1. [5] 1 John 3. 2.

reach there. Were people fixed like a rose or a cabbage, there would be no question of a right of way, nor of law or regulation to ensure it; since it is only motion or action that calls for rule and direction.

We certainly are not fixed, but are bound by duty to pursue our journey in life; and we have the right of way towards God. We cannot rest till we rest in Him; for which reason it is that men are so restless. But they have only to use their right, and employ means, which are not very remote. The steps by which we attain to God are not those of our feet, but the acts of our mind and heart; and, first and foremost, by speaking to God, treating with Him, and negotiating the success of our life's journey by prayer.

We cannot play the part of a log inert that has no sense; nor of a baby inept, which has none yet; nor of a silent partner in the business of creation, never reacting, never saying anything in address, appeal or response. Hear the reproach: "This people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." [1]

The good deeds of a social or civilian justice and philanthropy will not make up for the duty omitted of personal address or response to God. However, it is true that such good actions of a merely natural uprightness do often imply a reference to Him, and acquire thereby the force of prayer: "Give alms out of thy substance, and turn not away thy face from any poor person; for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee." [2] That the Lord should not turn away his face in view of a charitable deed shows that the act has the force

[1] Matt. 13. 15; John 12. 40. [2] Tob. 4. 7.

of prayer in winning favour, blessing and mercy. What this means is described in the psalm: "God be merciful to us, and bless us, and cause the light of His face to shine upon us." [1]

On every account excellent works of natural uprightness or philanthropy are not to be omitted. But the other duty is to be done, that of elevating the mind with the religious spirit of prayer, which makes the almsgiving worthy of divine complacency. "I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices," He says; but He explains that all you can give of this world's goods is already His, so He gains nothing thereby. What He desires is something of your own, not yet His: "Offer to God," He continues, "the sacrifice of praise; and pay thy vows to the Most High. And call upon Me in the day of trouble. I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." [2] Do not stint the oblation of intelligent worship: "Give and take, and justify thy soul." [3]

The salute of prayer is necessary, however free. It is as necessary as love is, as hope is, and rational fear; every one of which, and all other virtues, are free, and yet are necessary, if you mean to arrive whither they alone can lead. They are the family of divine Wisdom who, personified in Holy Writ, says of herself: "I am the mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope." [4] Of these virtues prayer is the voice, and conveys their petitions and acknowledgments with a devout heart. Speak and be spoken to.

* * *

The real word of our soul is the conception of the mind within, which the tongue is meant to interpret in language as faithful as may be.

[1] Ps. 66. 2.
[2] *Ibid.* 49. 8–15.
[3] Ecclus. 14. 16.
[4] *Ibid.* 24. 24.

The heart too has its conceptions. But these are feelings and sentiments; they are motions of the will, which may or may not prompt the mind to form distinct conceptions. The will or heart has indeed a time and beating of its own. The pulse of its poesy or music may beat so high that all spoken language is too lumbering to express it; the tongue does not try it; language has no formulas distinct enough to convey such aspirations of a heart; and only undertones, or the cadence of song may presume to breathe the soul dissolving in its ardours. So did Moses signify, when he said: "I beseech Thee, Lord, I am not eloquent from yesterday and the day before; and, since Thou hast spoken to Thy servant, I have more impediment and slowness of tongue." [1] His tongue was losing its cunning in the agitation of his emotions.

Meanwhile, the inner concepts of the intellect are the essential words of the soul. The one great concept of God Himself, equal to Him in His infinity, is named distinctly "The Word."

In human intercourse nothing is more precious than the word, so that without it there is no communication, and all other signs are devised only as substitutes for words. Now it is this utterance of our mind within, interpreted as best it may be by the words for the outer ear, that the Creator expects from the rational creature, listens to, and intends to answer. If the word is not uttered, at least in the conception of the mind, it is not heard; and the creature is left void. It is a condition of intercourse, and of the special providence which God intends to exercise on your behalf, that you on your part know Him, acknowledge Him, ask Him, and by this process call out in your favour the special providence

[1] Exod. 4. 10.

He wishes to pour over you. But, if you know not, you shall not be known. Really, to speak out your desire is the cheapest price, not to say the dearest token, for all that you want to buy: "Ask, and it shall be given you." No doubt, respectful silence is cheap. But it buys nothing.

* * *

Then the power of the word! It is the most potent among motive forces. The cry of a child will set a whole house in motion. The word of a man who asks will change a whole situation. People manœuvre and steer a conversation, to keep off a fact which they apprehend—some request. They will look the other way, go to the other side of the road, in order to evade the unspoken word of the sufferer, or the speaking look of the indigent. Some people even advocate laws to be passed, as a protection against the prepotence of appeals from the poor in public. The Good Samaritan, whose place was not there at all, came out of His way, and broke His journey, to answer the speechless appeal of humanity that lay by the wayside wounded.

As you must procure or purchase some way, you have prayer for the means of negotiation. It is the source of that affluence in spirit which, throbbing in the veins, makes us "live while we live"—not merely last, encumbering the ground, and being a cumbrance to ourselves. You cannot go on without the provision for living to some purpose—without the means to supply a thousand needs; the resources to shun a thousand dangers; the strength to press forward and fix the conditions of an eternity where you have never yet been, where you can take your chances only once, and having but one soul had better take no chances at all. Forewarned, forearmed and assured!

Prayer, which bids for a safe passage and goes to pay your way, is an essential function of "reasonable service," or "logical worship."[1] It is the drawer of eternal values. It is the central operation on which all the enterprises of life turn, securing treasures beyond the reach of moth or thief. When rightly made it expresses what we are right in desiring; and, reacting, it makes life itself right by the virtues which it calls into action. "He knows how to live aright who knows how to pray aright," says St. Augustine.

* * *

A prayerful life need not be called "mysticism," and must not be relegated to the fanciful regions of "romanticism." Such terms as "mysticism" which is rather high, and "romanticism" which is quite phantastic, go towards mystifying a very plain matter. Common sense employs the words, "prayer" and "devotion," of which the good sense of a Christian recognizes the effects in action; for with the spirit of devotion and petition to God he undertakes to control the entire conduct of his existence.

Neither should any one consider that it little befits the dignity of God to be known by our humanity and dealt with in a human way; that it is not quite proper to look at Him with the eye of an intelligence which, like ours, is sunk to the ears in matter; that it is derogatory to His greatness if we speak of Him, or speak to Him, in the language and with the sentiments which are our very own. There are those who have said it is a great impropriety, if we presume to pass off our ways on Him, who is the transcendent First Cause, making Him talk and express sentiments like our own. Would it not be much more proper, they opine, to regard Him, or

[1] Rom. 12. 1.

disregard Him as simply Unknown? Leave Him out of human life, isolated and discarded. Indeed, here is one who writes that, for himself, what he calls "the gods" have always been far away; and there he begs to leave them—whether "gods" or God, it is all one to him. So, in short, the Bible and religious people are charged with irreverence in making God realistic—or, as a big word puts it, "anthropomorphic," that is, making Him like to man.

But that is what you cannot do; for two reasons at least. First, you cannot make anything like to yourself by simply eyeing it, or knowing it. Secondly, still less can you make God like unto man, whether by looking at Him, or in any other way. For a person is never like his statue or image. It is the image or statue that is like the person. It is man who is like to God, being made in His image, becoming more like Him by contemplation, and most of all by virtue. His evolution is "deiform"; he is making for God, assuming the divine. If big words are desirable, the process which actually takes place should be called "theomorphic," making man like to God; not "anthropomorphic," making God like man.

* * *

Certainly, our language and concepts, concerning One who is not an object of sense, are very much clothed in sensible imagery. But that does not detract from their truth, sincerity or propriety. In fact, there is a deep relationship between things of sense that have been made and Him who made them. All things, however tangible, visible, gross, light or airy, have some relation to Him from whom all comes, to whom all goes, who, in a sense much truer than that of the Pantheists, is as the Apostle says "all in all";[1] and our thoughts, sentiments, words,

[1] 1 Cor. 15. 28.

though reeking with the products of sense, never express anything but what has some analogy with Him. God's visible world is rich in material to body forth the most immaterial truths.

So, when we call Our Lord the "Lion of Juda," we have truth and propriety on our side. Yet we do not make Him a lion thereby. And, when we ascribe to God in an infinite degree the attributes of mercy, kindliness, condescension, justice, which with us are virtues, there is no ground for offence in our rising from such effects below to know the Cause above. There is very good sense in predicating such good things about Him who caused them; or, as the Scripture calls it, in "praising" Him with the help of what we know He has done. But we do not therefore make Him a man, or "anthropomorphic." It is all the other way: "You are gods, and all of you the sons of the Most High." [1]

This plea for prayer may suffice, as derived from the rational instinct, the noble privilege, and the rigorous law. We ought to pray always,[2] in season and out of season; for all times are seasonable with God, who sleeps not and is never weary. With the help of prayer we can govern not only ourselves, but the course of the world, shaping its fortunes as the Church professedly claims to do, when she prays: "Grant us, O Lord, that the course of the world may be directed in peace for us by Thy order; and Thy Church may rejoice in tranquil devotion."

[1] Ps. 81. 6. [2] Luke 18. 1.

Chapter IV

THE KINGDOM AND PUBLIC WORSHIP

There are many kingdoms and states in this world, with their various institutions, whether despotic, military or free. The administration of them is called political; under which no little good is effected, objects of ambition are compassed, and profit is made in various ways, by means of money, of favour, of agitation, or the force of public opinion.

There is also the Kingdom of God; and we are bidden to say: "Thy Kingdom come!" This is the Church of Christ upon earth, as it is the Church of the Blessed in heaven. On earth it embraces in its allegiance, by the necessity of nature and birth, every child of man, who is in it, or is called to be, and will be, or ought to be a member of Christ's Church. In this Kingdom, which being superimposed on human events is meant to use them for a supernatural end as the soul uses the body, the specific power, by which the purposes of men are to be effectually wrought out, shaped, and accomplished, is that of prayer: Ask, seek, knock! Supernatural purposes are to be wrought out with natural causes, if they lend themselves; and may be worked out without them, God willing, if they do not. For He can save the ship, says the Wise Man, even when the mariner's art is in default;[1] and, if God will have it so, the expectant sea must put up with the loss of its morsel, and swallow an affront instead.

Of one, whom Our Lord was preparing as a fit

[1] Wisd. 14. 4.

subject for the administration of His kingdom, He said: "Behold, he prayeth!" [1] Christ had brought the persecutor Saul to his knees. That prayer in which Saul asked for grace was itself a grace, held out by God and seized by the man. It was a needle lent to draw in the golden thread of favour, and of a divine vocation. The persecutor Saul became the Apostle Paul.

"We will give ourselves continually to prayer," said the twelve Apostles; "and to the ministry of the word." [2] They were the Cabinet and had the ear of the King. They were to have the ear of the world also. For this they had the guarantee of His power, promised over and over again: "You shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you." [3] Henceforth prayer was to make up in part for the privilege, now withdrawn, of having Himself and His power visibly present among them; as He expressed it at the moment of withdrawing from them: "Hitherto you have not asked anything in my name. Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full." [4]

* * *

There was also the injunction to pray in common. After placing in His Church the highest powers of binding and loosening, He guaranteed to His disciples the universal power of obtaining whatsoever they should agree to ask for, and He laid it down as a general law of His kingdom: "Where there are two or three gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." [5] The form of the Lord's Prayer invites us to this community of intercessory worship; for we do not say, My Father, but "Our Father"; and we pray: "Give us this day our daily

[1] Acts 9. 11. [2] *Ibid.* 6. 4. [3] John 14. 14; 15. 7; 16. 23.
[4] *Ibid.* 16. 24. [5] Matt. 18. 18–20.

bread." Many little orisons combine to make a great chorus of love and desire.

Individuals can pray at all times and in every place. Going into their chamber they may shut the door, and pray to the Father who is in secret; and the Father who seeth in secret will repay them.[1] Motives of devotion dictate retirement from the bustle and glare of the world. But it is not commendable to shrink from sight through any mere timidity arising from human respect. "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." [2] There is, of course, a Pharisaical hypocrisy which makes ostentation of piety. But there is another hypocrisy, that of worldliness, which makes parade of impiety, of irreligion, or, as it gently calls the fashion, of "indifference." The fact is, no man is indifferent to religion, any more than he is indifferent to himself. Irreligion is an affectation of human respect.

Public worship provides for the profession and discharge of a common duty—for the lighting of the lamp, and putting it on its stand, that it may shine to all in the house.[3] The exercise of public worship calls for the appointment of a common time, and of a place determined. So God Himself fixed the term of the seventh day as limiting the period of time for the duty of public worship. It was also His will that He should be invoked in a place set apart and consecrated for the purpose, where, as He said, "My name shall be." [4] He said that He would hearken in a special way to the prayers offered Him in that place.

The royal splendours of divine service in honour

[1] Matt. 6. 6. [2] *Ibid.* 5. 16. [3] *Ibid.* 5. 15.
[4] Deut. 12. 11; 2 Paral. 7. 15.

of Him, "whom to know is to live, and whom to serve is to reign"; the joy of worship in the magnificence of temples, which aspiring to heaven raise the imagination and mind from earth; the interaction of devotion and zeal, which springing forth from community of sentiments and unity of purpose proceed to organize institutions for the extension of God's kingdom, and the diffusion of peace among men—all these are but manifestations of a life in common, and of a Christian commonwealth which was quickened into existence by the blessing poured over the Church: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."

In paying our tributes to the Divine Majesty we profess with David: "All things are Thine; and we have only given Thee what we have received of Thy hand. For we are sojourners and strangers before Thee, as were all our fathers. Our days upon earth are as a shadow, and there is no abiding. . . . And now with great joy have I seen Thy people here present make willingly their offerings unto Thee." [1]

So the body politic, which presupposes the duty of religion in its members, is itself supposed and required by natural law to exercise public worship, as all peoples at all times have been found to do in the course of their history. By the body politic we understand the corporate adjustment of society, keeping civil order and peace among many individuals, whom patriarchal ties of family and kindred no longer suffice to keep united in obedience and order. This condition of civil union imposes divers obligations; and it also creates new rights. In so many lines of material development, the State restricts freedom, but assures elbow-room for all. In

[1] 1 Paral. 29. 14–17.

matters of high intelligence, which are not rated at a commercial value, it adds facilities, and smooths the way for institutions, which are the effects of advanced civilization, and are the causes of advancing it still farther.

As to the greatest of institutions, the Kingdom of Christ upon earth, the State presupposes it, as it supposes the existence of the religious sentiment, and of religious life in the citizens. For all these belong to an order of duties, rights and moral qualities affecting the individuals and family units, antecedent to any civic life.

Chapter V

CLASSES OF MEN: CONDITIONS OF PRAYER

It takes all sorts of people to make a world. But there is only one sort of leverage by which the world of mankind can exert its powers in the Kingdom of God, and take its part in the divine providence and government of the world. That leverage is prayer. Let us sketch some classes of men in characteristic scenes of life and work, to show how prayer is used and applied in the most diverse circumstances of human existence. We borrow from Holy Writ, and retain the figurative language of the sacred writers.

There are those who go down to the sea in ships. The floods lift up their voice; they lift up their waves. Wonderful are the surges of the sea; they mount up to heaven; they go down to the depths. Men reel, and their wisdom is swallowed up. The storm centre rolls round in a circle. Lightnings blaze in the sky. Then the mariners cry to the Lord in their affliction. He, whose way is in the sea and whose paths are in many waters, hears the cries. His footsteps are not seen; but behind the clouds His face is beaming. He turns the storm into a breeze, and the waves into a calm. The hearts of the mariners rejoice:—Let the mercies of the Lord give glory to Him![1]

There are those who go to war. Their lot is to be victory, or the reverse. Both alternatives are subject to God's providence; but He in turn subjects them to man's prayer. This is clear, says the psalmist,

[1] Ps. 76. 19, 20; 92. 3, 4; 106. 23–31.

from God's antecedents in former times; hence we expect the same in our days. The royal prophet speaks thus: We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what Thou didst do in their days, in the days of old. Now in Thee we will toss our enemies upon our horns; and in Thy name we will bring to nought those who rise up against us. This is the doing of Thy right hand, and of Thy right arm; this the light of Thy countenance. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord. And, saith the Lord, cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord, abandoning the moral sanctity of faith and right for the brute force of a fist or a heel.[1]

On the other hand, our portion may be defeat. But for this too the Lord has made arrangements, placing the circumstances at our disposal by means of prayer. Christ Our Lord gave us to understand that prayer has jurisdiction over such ungovernable elements as the toss and throw of dice in battles of the future, and over the issues of life and death which shall be affected by the accidents of time and place; for He said: "Pray that your flight be not in the winter, or on the Sabbath." [2]

There are those who suffer from famine and pestilence. "The fig-tree shall not blossom; and there shall be no spring in the vines. The labour of the olive-tree shall fail; and the fields shall yield no food. The flock shall be cut off from the fold; and there shall be no herd in the stalls. But I will rejoice in the Lord"; who reassures us with His promises. He says: "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." Whereunto the soul replies with confidence: "The eyes of all hope in Thee, O Lord; and Thou givest them meat

[1] Ps. (LXX), 43. 2, 4, 6. Jer. 17. 5, 7. [2] Matt. 24. 20.

in due season. Thou openest Thy hand, and fillest with blessing every living creature." [1]

The same providence rules over sickness, penury and accidents. These are evils which, as often as not, are secret blessings. Our times and our fortunes are in His hands; and the purposes which are being wrought out transcend our ken. His ways are not our ways, as the Lord saith; for, as the heavens are exalted above the earth, so His ways are exalted above our ways, and His thoughts above our thoughts. He says expressly: "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil—I the Lord, that do all these things." At the same time, a virtue goeth forth from the Sun of Justice with healing on its wings; [2] and, as a prayer of the Church has it, no adversity can do real harm, if there is no iniquity there to do it.

Finally, there are those trembling in spiritual danger, or groaning under the actual evils of the heart. Who was not innocent once? In the sinking of the spirit the soul reverts to the days of which Job says: "Who will grant me that I might be according to the months past, according to the days in which God kept me; when His lamp shone over my head, and I walked by His light in darkness!" But now other times, and the influences of men have passed over the tender heart. Soul has brought anguish to soul; for man is a wolf to man, *Homo homini lupus*. The soul raises its voice in prayer: "Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me; for my soul trusteth in Thee. And in the shadow of Thy wings will I hope, until iniquity pass away . . . I slept troubled. The sons of men, whose teeth are weapons and arrows; and their tongue a sharp

[1] Habac. 3. 17, 18. Ps. 49. 15; 144. 15, 16.
[2] Ps. 30. 16. Isai. 45. 7; 55. 8, 9. Mal. 4. 2.

sword!" Hear the divine response on the subject of the soul's betrayal: "You were sold for naught, and you shall be redeemed without money . . . I myself that spoke, behold I am here!" [1]

He is waiting for us. As the stars wait upon Him in their watches—He calls them, and they answer with joy, Here we are! [2] so we call to Him; we cry; and He says, Here I am.[3]

"Who is wise, and will keep these things? and will understand the mercies of the Lord?" [4]

* * *

This calls for a word of wisdom to the wise on the manner of praying, and the conditions of successful prayer. Four conditions are laid down: that the petition be offered up with devotion, on one's own behalf, with perseverance, and for the spiritual good of the soul: *Ut petatur pie, et pro se, et perseveranter, et ad salutem.* We may explain the points as follows.

In the first place there must be seriousness, in taking up a grave matter gravely. "The man who despiseth a business shall be despised by it." [5] If people do not listen to themselves, why should they expect to be listened to? They may honour God with their lips, but their heart is far from Him.[6]

In the second place, if any cloud of sin estranges the soul from its Maker, the first grace to be asked for, or at least to be implicitly desired, is that of reconciliation with God; or the state of antagonism will remain, and the sinner's presumption will only spoil his prayer for favour: "The hand of the Lord is not shortened that it cannot save, neither is His ear heavy that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have divided you from your God, and your sins have

[1] Job. 29. 2, 3. Ps. 56. 2, 5. Isai. 52. 3, 6. [2] Baruch 3. 34, 35.
[3] Isai. 58. 9. [4] Ps. 106. 43. [5] Prov. (LXX), 13. 13.
[6] Mark 7. 6.

hid His face from you that He should not hear."[1] Thus Job says of the unscrupulous man, who is always getting, no matter how, until he gets into trouble: "Will the Lord hear his cry, when distress shall come upon him. Or can he delight himself in the Almighty, and call upon God at all times?"[2] It is even said: "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, his prayer shall be an abomination."[3] This, no doubt, refers to the duplicity of the hypocrite, or to the obduracy of the impenitent.

For the impious can desire things pious, and the unjust can do things just; and, though such good works are not yet done well, the prayer of the soul is not therefore that of the hard heart, which will not be moved from evil, nor of the double heart, which puts on the figure of godliness without the virtue or substance thereof.[4] Hence, at the very outset, peace and reconciliation with God are to be asked for, as we say in the Our Father: "Forgive us our sins."[5] From the humility and sincerity of such repentance springs up the confidence which is inculcated, that we ought to "ask in faith, nothing wavering," and that we be not double-minded, inconstant in all our ways.[6] This very confidence of ours we advance as a measure of the favour which God is to extend: "Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we have hoped in Thee."[7]

With such a spirit of confidence it is easy for us to be serious and intent, to be insistent and even importunate, as Our Lord recommended.[8] All moments are seasonable with God, who sleepeth not; and who, because of our importunity, gives us all we need of good, protecting us from all we fear of evil. "Watch

[1] Isai. 59. 1, 2. [2] Job. 27. 8–10. [3] Prov. 28. 9.
[4] 2 Tim. 3. 5. [5] Luke 11. 4. [6] James 1. 6, 8.
[7] Ps. 32. 22. [8] Luke 11. 8.

ye therefore, praying at all times, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that are to come, and to stand before the Son of Man." [1]

* * *

Thirdly, as we do not see into the designs of God, our prayerful confidence means also deference to the superior wisdom and will which guide and govern us: "This is the confidence which we have towards Him, that, whatsoever we shall ask according to His will, He heareth us." [2] We are to ask according to His will; because our own is that of short-sighted beings. "Hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon earth; and with labour do we find the things that are before us. But the things that are in heaven who shall search out?" [3]

Some things which we ask for are right, warranted by what we are, or what we have to do. Other objects of desire are wrong; because, though good in themselves, they are conceived out of time, place and proportion, like matter out of place, which means disorder. Or they are bad for the person asking, since they will entail the deprivation of some real good for him, as too much money may do, too much comfort, or honour. Or they are so bad in themselves that they lay no pretence to being good, but are only things snatched at by some irregular passion, as that evil should befall one's enemy.

Again there are other objects of desire, which present no positive features of right or wrong. They are all the world of things indifferent, through which life wends its way, intending to avail itself of such objects as good sense may recommend. Here is a wide field for the omnipotence of prayer in guiding one's choice and realizing it. Still it would be unkind

[1] Luke 21. 36. [2] 1 John 5. 14. [3] Wisd. 9. 16.

of God to grant what His kindness may see reason to begrudge; or to deliver at once what would do better at another time. God foresees the occasion when the soul will show itself at its best, and profit most by the boon. For all gifts are reckoned and rated as instrumental to His grace, and as conducive to the soul's eternal glory. In the mean time, if He does not give at present what we ask for, He gives provisionally in other values beyond all our desires.

Epicurus noted also, with the light of his pagan intellect, that, if the gods minded all the prayers which are offered up, the human race would come to an untimely end, so many things are asked for to the damage of other people, or of the general order, or of ourselves. Socrates dilated on this, concluding that we should ask for nothing in particular, but only for good things in general. This idea, however, of good things only in general could easily blunt the point and efficacy of prayer, both on our side and on that of Almighty God, if it had a touch either of indifferentism about it: "Let come what may!" or of fatalism: "What shall be, shall be!"

In the last place, you may feel assured of a happy issue, when you are asking for yourself; but not to the same degree if you are soliciting for another. You are master of your own situation in fulfilling the conditions. You are not master in making the other fulfil his; for he may default. Thus you engage yourself to discharge all enmities: "Forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors." No doubt you will do your part here. Will the other do his? Well, in any case, your prayer is not lost; on which point St. Thomas quotes the psalm: "My prayer shall be turned into my own bosom." [1]

* * *

[1] Ps. 34. 13.

To end with a fitting close this consideration on prayer which, like a walk with God in the afternoon air of paradise,[1] helps us to so much knowledge of His ways and ours, we may revert to one of the gentlest and tenderest strains in our intercourse with Him. It is the sociability of both God and man, and, on our part, the craving for sympathy. However void we are, our feelings are deep within. Down in our hearts we live a life intense and unceasing, throbbing with pulsations which are often muffled, but never arrested. From the persons most near to us we are still so far, that we would fain at times invite some one to come and share the secrets of our intimate confidence. But, when the efforts of friendship have done their utmost, it still remains true that

> Thought is deeper than all speech;
> Feeling deeper than all thought.

However, there is One who knows us, to whom a sigh means as much as a discourse, and whose distinctive title is, "the reader of hearts." Our inner life, so perpetually our own secret, is perfectly possessed by Him, who searches the reins and the heart. His presence is indeed that of a Creator and Lord, but also, first and last, that of a Father: "Our Father, who art in heaven!"

Sweet name! O Lord, we have been waiting for Thee. Be Thou our arm in the morning, and our salvation in the day of trouble. We live for Thee, who wipest the tear from every eye, who bringest truth, and keepest our peace. We have hoped in Thee; and in the remembrance of Thee our soul hath yearned. Our spirit riseth to Thee, O God, in the morning early, for Thy behests are the light of

[1] Gen. 3. 8; 17. 1.

day. O Lord our God, possess us; we know none outside of Thee. All our works Thou hast done for us; grant us peace. Renew Thy signs, and work new wonders. Glorify Thy hand and the might of Thy right arm. We pronounce Thy Name.[1]

Sweet Name! in Thy each syllable
A thousand blest Arabias dwell!
A thousand hills of frankincense,
Mountains of myrrh and beds of spices,
And ten thousand paradises
  The soul that tastes Thee takes from thence.
How many unknown worlds there are
  Of comforts which Thou hast in keeping!
How many thousand mercies there
  In pity's soft lap lie a-sleeping!
Happy he who has the art
    To awake them,
    And to take them
Home, and lodge them in his heart.[2]

[1]Isai. 25. 8; 26. 3, 9, 12, 13; 33. 2. Ecclus. 36. 6, 7. [2]Crashaw.

TRUTH

Chapter VI

MENTAL PRAYER

At this point, in view of such a divine contemplation as we see ravishing poet and prophet, a certain soul addresses us in these terms: "Listen to the latest from Ruysbroeck: 'You must, besides, cleave to God with the activity of love. It must be a fire at white heat, burning, inextinguishable; the ardour which burns, opens the spirit. You must lose yourself in the sacred darkness, where fruition delivers man from himself; and he cannot find himself in a human way. Light is given in the simple essence of the spirit where man receives it, far above all gifts, in the void of fruition that has delivered man from himself. The contemplative, in that vastness where he reposes, sees nothing, feels nothing save the light itself, a certain incomprehensible splendour. Happy the eye which sees so! The just man who has built his life on peace and action raises an everlasting monument. By the force of love the spirit raises itself above all movements in Unity itself.'" The writer continues: "I am going to buy all this at any cost!"

Here was a soul that had long before been attracted by the better gifts, and the portion of Benjamin, "best beloved of the Lord."[1] This portion of Benjamin has been understood to typify the higher walks of contemplation. Richard of St. Victor, treating of higher prayer in two works, entitled them respectively *Benjamin Minor* and *Benjamin Major.*

[1] Deut. 33. 12.

So, to answer questions and observations on these matters, we may draw material from Richard of St. Victor and his great master, Hugh of St. Victor, two mediæval theologians and mystics, whose school St. Thomas Aquinas followed, and all later mystical writers have kept in view. Hugh, a writer no less profound in thought than brilliant in style, was apparently a Saxon; and, like St. Augustine, he has thrown some of his writings into the form of a dialogue. Richard was a "Scot," whether of Ireland or Scotland does not appear. His acumen was worthy of his origin, and his spiritual insight was not less worthy of the Isle of Saints.

Under the name, and along with the sterling gold of such masters, whether Saxon, Scottish or Irish, we may presume to pass off some currency of a more recent date, not less sterling though issued later from the mint. The form of dialogue, favoured by Hugh of St. Victor and by St. Augustine, commends itself as a compendious way for despatching quickly a number of queries, and applying the proper critical formulas to many doubtful propositions. Thus, conversing with Benjamin, we shall be answering the observations of one at whose request these pages are written.

Benjamin. When the experiences of my soul are analogous to those I read of, does it mean that they are on the same level?

St. Victor. As to experiences, let Richard of St. Victor define them. We advance gradually, he says, and we are led to the practice of perfection, by several kinds of experience; that is to say, by application to work, by application to meditation, and by application to prayer. By the mere fact of working, of being up and doing, we experience much; by

searching in meditation we find out much; and by praying we extort much.

Now as to your question, what such experiences amount to in the spiritual life, I answer that, when you are on this path, you are on the way to perfection, understanding it better, practising it more, and negotiating further progress with the help of God. You have experience, discernment, and something to show for your pains. And, as the whole spiritual life is one ascending series of acts, steps and mansions, a clear analogy of substantial likeness amid much unlikeness runs through the scale of experiences from top to bottom, and from bottom to top. Beginners can apprehend things belonging to the perfect; for things are alike, though at different levels; they show different degrees of intensive beauty, while the groundwork of the plan is the same. The plan within us is all one; that of mind, heart and memory, with their many adornments of faith, hope and charity. The plan without us likewise is all one; for we see the whole world about us, above, below and beneath, all wrapped up in the likenesses of analogy. The Wise Man comprises the Maker Himself of the world in the wonderful connection of all things, so like and so unlike; for he says: "By the greatness of the beauty of the things made the Maker of them is seen analogously"; as the Septuagint's word is, "*analógōs*." [1] Hence, in answer to your question, I say briefly, the simplest soul that says its prayers has an intuition of spiritual heights and depths. Less light or more, to see more or less by, makes no difference in kind, but only in degree. "*Puro cernamus intuitu*," says the Church on behalf of all: "May we see with a pure intuition."

[1] Wisd. (LXX), 13. 5; Vulgate: *cognoscibiliter*.

BENJAMIN. Less light! Then one is less advanced if not in those higher walks of contemplation?

ST. VICTOR. That does not follow. Do not confound the perfection of virtue with the perfection of prayer or contemplation. You might be very perfect in virtue, and yet have nothing to do with the favours infused in mystic prayer. These favours are rays of light direct, when God chooses to cleave the clouds lying so heavily on our minds, and to infuse gifts of special insight for reasons of His own. Even for the knowledge of Christian faith, which it is enjoined upon every one to acquire and profess, there is need of a special grace and light infused. Thus Christ said of faith in His own divinity: "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven." [1]

We are very dull and materialized creatures, owing to the control of sense and imagination over us. We are dazzled by things above. No wonder! In the bright rays of a natural object like the Sun we are forced to shade our eyes. How much more is our intellect overpowered by the splendour of God's being, which is above all nature! Thus Job said of his own religious sentiment: "I have always feared God as waves swelling over me, and the weight of Him I could not bear." [2]

Hence for things supernatural there is always need of power infused, the grace of light and the grace of strength. But, when God wishes something very special to be understood, something quite beyond the usual sweep of His supernatural providence, He has still to infuse special powers and a strength of mind corresponding. This is what we have seen done with the prophets, and with the

[1] Matt. 16. 17. [2] Job 31. 23.

mystics, in their contemplation and heavenly vision.

So you observe that prayer and contemplation are only a means; the perfection of them is perfection in the use of an instrument. Whereas the perfection of virtue is the end in view; it is the possession of sanctity, which can be attained by other means than by the infused gifts of mystic prayer. You know how St. Paul describes all kinds of mystic graces; but then he proceeds: "Be zealous for the better gifts; and I show unto you yet a more excellent way." He shows us forthwith the way of Faith, Hope and Charity; the greatest of the three being divine charity, by which we love God above all things and our neighbour as ourselves.[1] This way of Faith, Hope and Charity, which is accessible to every one, is opened to the soul by the exercise of simple prayer, thoughtful, meditative and reasonable—that mental prayer, which with vocal aids is the usual and everyday exercise of all devout souls, even of such as are familiar with the mystic way.

BENJAMIN. Well, one who has the perfect form of prayer is perfect also in virtue.

ST. VICTOR. Ought to be! Need not be so; nor keep so! However, if such a soul does fail and fall back in virtue, it can recur to its old gift of prayer, which made it so mellow and susceptible before; and it can lay itself open again to the divine influences already so familiar. That is what David did after his long estrangement from God.

But, when you speak of the perfect gift, you seem to be thinking of mystic prayer. Now that is not the only perfect form. There are two kinds of contemplation, both perfect—the mystic kind, which is infused, and the acquired kind, which is spoken of simply as mental prayer. Acquired contemplation

[1] 1 Cor. 12. 31; 13.

is that which is formed by exercise, self-habituation and experience. For this, sanctifying grace is warrant enough; and good will does the rest. Such prayer the soul can resume as naturally as any other habit, just like taking up again with a piano disused, or a violin laid aside. God's co-operating grace is not wanting.

I say, the warrant for His prompt concurrence in such spiritual matters is already conveyed in our possession of His sanctifying grace; which is not a solitary endowment of justification, but is attended with many gifts and privileges, many claims and securities, from the moment of our regeneration in baptism. As the natural soul was prime but raw material for regeneration into the supernatural order of grace, and in this sense is said to be "naturally Christian," so the soul when regenerated is prime but finished material for all further gifts descending from the Father of Lights, and receives grace of every kind "connaturally." Aptitude for personal union with the Personal God is the native temper of such a soul, as you see in innocent children, to whom knowing and dealing with the great God seems to come more than naturally. Then, as St. Gregory says, if anyone sees Him who sees all, such a one will see all things in Him. "Unveil my eyes," chants the psalmist.[1]

Habits acquired of internal recollection and union with God become the very mould of life, and give a cast to one's ordinary reflections on men and things. The person who has the eye of his soul purified to find and observe God present and active everywhere will

> Carry music in his heart
> Through dusty lane and wrangling mart.

[1] Ps. 118. 18.

The ways of practising the imagination and cultivating the intelligence, to coax out a generous growth of internal recollection and divine consciousness, are well known to such as are familiar with the *Spiritual Exercises*.

* * *

Benjamin. Formerly, even when He was most manifest to me, I did not rest therein, but kept on begging Him to manifest Himself completely; which I thought was possible only by a resort to the extraordinary. Now I rest completely in His veiled presence as the term of spiritual existence here. Consequently there is much more quiet and happiness. It is the attainment of the promised land through faith. Is that what the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius are designed to conduct a soul to?

St. Victor. The theory and system of Spiritual Exercises is chiefly to meditate, in order to understand well; to rest on what attracts and absorbs; to apply and spiritualize the imagination by entertaining it with divine things and persons, and with the products of divine power and wisdom; to keep the life of sense well in hand; and thus, by control of the powers below, and by elevation of the powers above, to acquire the habit of contemplation. To taste and see that the Lord is sweet—to enjoy the fragrance of His attributes both in the vesture of creation as His garments float in the wind, and in the beauties of the Incarnate Word who draws souls after Him in the odour of His ointments—all this is laying the soul open to divine influences, and, if God so wills, to other things of the mystic sort, which may be added. In any case, when the mind is well stored, and the imagination with its subordinate senses is well tempered, the habit is formed of walking with Him, and of living in His secret tabernacle,

as persons live a home life together, and work in the same room, though actually no words may be passing between them. The heart watches even in sleep.

Benjamin. I don't like to meditate. The difficulty lies in handling the material, in manipulating it as directed. I want to stay still, and just look.

St. Victor. If that is the outcome of a mind well informed and primed on divine mysteries, it is contemplation. The Curé d'Ars noticed a peasant who was habitually before the Blessed Sacrament, and apparently was not reciting prayers, nor doing anything in particular. The Curé took occasion to ask him how he was occupying himself. The good man replied: "I look at Him, and He looks at me."

Meditation is calculated to supply wealth of thought, and to stimulate the movement of affections. But, when the knowledge which was novel has become normal in the steady light and life of the soul, discursive reflection may subside, while the affections survive. These becoming habitual are sweet and tasteful in the easy union of contemplation. "Taste and see that the Lord is sweet." [1] Such a development of tender devotion must run parallel with substantial devotion; that is to say, with the will to do promptly whatever pertains to the service of God, whether the thing be pleasurable to the sensibilities or quite otherwise. For it may be extremely painful. Nevertheless, substantial devotion is essentially a state of spiritual joy, at least in the fine point of the spirit, even while in its appurtenances it may be profoundly saddening. We have seen this in the martyrs laying down their lives for God, and in the King of Martyrs who died crucified for men.

* * *

[1] Ps. 33. 9.

BENJAMIN. I am much impressed with that passage of Habacuc: I will stand on my guard and watch, to see what shall be said to me.

ST. VICTOR. If you mean that the soul is subject to the Lord, and waiting on Him, and "silent to the Lord" [1] in recollection of spirit, then the word of your salvation and perfection will yet come from His lips. However, that does not mean the quietism of doing nothing on your own part.

BENJAMIN. Quietism! It is all the other way! Great thoughts possess the mind, and make it restless. They press one upon another; and how utilize them all? They slip away, and seem to leave no trace.

ST. VICTOR. Or they have done their work, and their effects are now part of yourself. Or the Holy Ghost keeps them for you, and they will serve you another time. At a feast you don't expect to eat everything. But everything is abundant, and nicely prepared, to diffuse cheerfulness and to whet appetite, though there are more tasty things spread about you than you think of touching.

BENJAMIN. Oh! I understand that! Glimpses of the Creator as revealed in His creation, and the fragrance of His presence as wafted on the wings of thought, diffuse a spiritual pleasure in the heart of the creature. But here the thought occurs, what interest can He have in our attaining that knowledge of Him, which He desires and requires of us?

ST. VICTOR. Job's friend asked something like that: "What doth it profit God if thou be just?" [2] I answer, that is His only pay; and therefore is He so busy with you, to receive what He has earned—what the Doctors call, *claram cum laude notitiam*, a clear knowledge of Him and His ways, with the

[1] Ps. 61. 2. [2] Job. 22. 3.

personal acknowledgments due for all He has done. This is your praise and His glory. He Himself describes how it is connected with the sense and virtue of justice: "They seek me from day to day, and desire to know my ways; as a nation that hath done justice, and hath not forsaken the judgment of their God. They ask of Me the judgments of justice; they are willing to approach to God."[1] Dryden observes:

> This general worship is to praise and pray;
> One part to borrow blessings, one to pay.

The whole course of our being sets to Him, with more justice and fixity of direction than what another poet claims for an earthly attachment to a relative:

> Where'er I roam, whatever realms to see,
> My heart, untravell'd, fondly turns to thee.

Indeed, the heart of a person is a well-spring of thought and love, which God meant should well up to Himself in eternal life:

> Live while you live, the epicure would say,
> And seize the pleasures of the present day;
> Live while you live, the sacred preacher cries,
> And give to God each moment as it flies:—
> Lord, in my views let both united be;
> I live to pleasure when I live to Thee.

When you think of Him, know Him, and act all in your own way, He is satisfied, and more gratified than if He had to be doing things for you in His way, or instead of you. He is master enough in creation. He should like to see you master also, since He has put all things in your hands—yourself, your powers, and all else beside you and outside. You exercise your jurisdiction over creation, when your eye

[1] Isai. 58. 2.

glances in worship from earth to heaven and from heaven to earth, and you command all things to bless the Lord: "*Benedicite omnia opera Domini Domino*"—the heavens, the sun, the stars, the dew, heat and cold, night and day, light and darkness, mountains and fountains, seas and rivers, fowls of the air and beasts of the field—"praise and exalt Him above all for ever. . . . Every breath of God, bless the Lord!" [1] That breath which God has put in creatures—you are making it speak when you make it vocal in the reed of your prayer, *Benedicite!*

Praise and worship save the world of matter from being without a witness. Praise and worship save it from being sunk in the slough of materialism. What are even sacrifices to God in comparison with the spirit of reverence which offers them? He asks, what are bullocks to Him, or goats; what is all the glow of shining stars above, or this other quantity of dead clay in the world about us below? "Shall I eat the flesh of bullocks?" He asks; "or shall I drink the blood of goats? Offer to God the sacrifice of praise, and pay thy vows to the Most High. And call upon me in the day of trouble. I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." [2]

* * *

Benjamin. While it seems a pity that, in a life so divine, one cannot be intense all the time, at least we can be assured that union with God is not broken off, when the efforts grow slack.

St. Victor. No! Even an express train does not go all the time at full speed. But it is going; and it will arrive. When it seems to be taking its time, its head of steam is gathering to push on ahead. Your advancement is not arrested when only its rate is

[1] Dan. 3. 59–81. [2] Ps. 49. 13, 14.

varied. But really it is not a question of speed and rate. You are not running on a track at all. You are free like a bird of the air; where I may remark, it is noted by Bellarmine that the Hebrews denominated a bird by a word signifying "liberty," so free does the winged creature appear, flying and perching where it will. And, so it is, you may perch as you choose on divers branches of the great mustard tree, which, says St. Jerome, represent the various truths of divine knowledge, expressed in the lucid form of dogmas on matters natural, moral, theoretical and practical. When you flit from one to another for a change of repose or of diet, you are not idling. You have ever so much to do with the truth and mystery and fact and dogma, which are budding into fruit all about you; and the rustling foliage of tender devotions adorn and protect the fruit, fostering the solid effects of intelligence with the moving affections of the heart. The spiritual life, which is led at the King's right hand, is alive with a variety of spiritual attractions,[1] and, whether working or playing, it waxes stronger all the time.

Benjamin. A beautiful contemplation! But a speculation quite lost on the world!

St. Victor. Because its heart is not in them. God is largely sought by the heart and the will, by our sentiments and our wish to find Him. For our intellect and reason, if not hampered in producing their effects, will engage the affections to pursue truth with the arts of love. Our intelligence seizing the truth is captured, and captivates the rest of our faculties with the charm of seeking Him the more, when once we have found Him. "They that eat Me, shall yet hunger; and they that drink Me shall yet thirst." "In Me is all grace of the way and of

[1] Ps. 44. 11.

the truth, in Me is all hope of life and of virtue."[1] And then, when the heart is engaged, the mind is flooded so much the more with truth, "*recta sapere*," so that all we knew before would seem to have been ignorance in comparison.

If you ask, what is meant by a good heart, which has such reciprocal power in stimulating the intelligence to know more, I will tell you from St. Augustine and St. Chrysostom. It is a pure heart, a clean one, simple in its candour and neatness, *simplex munditiis*. It is there, says Chrysostom, that the highest philosophy resides, to be "simple with prudence"—not to be high-minded, conceited and proud, which is all a form of stupidity. God is felt by the heart; yea, says St. Augustine, He is seen by it, *Cum corde videatur Deus*.

And so, since into a malicious soul wisdom enters not, and will not dwell in a body subject to sins,[2] Our Lord expressly denoted the uprightness of a good heart, in desiring to do, as a principal avenue to the understanding in its coming to know: "If any man will do the will of Him, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."[3]

* * *

Benjamin. Then it is under the impulse of the heart and its just sentiments that we spring forward to truth and light? The logical faculty, though it is made for truth, seems in practice to be notoriously ineffective for moving any one forward by demonstration or persuasion. The speculations of people, their complaints and their sighs, show truth to be no more taking and persuasive to pure reason, than the bright ice of a glacier is to the sense of comfort. People will have none of it, except to look at it from

[1] Ecclus. 24. 25, 29. [2] Wisd. 1. 4. [3] John 7. 17.

afar and talk about it, and shiver over it. The other day a person said of some reasoning about religion, that it was "too logical to be true!"

St. Victor. Our self-guidance, however, and the direction we take is not by force of sentiment and the heart, but by hard facts, which address themselves to reason, and then are supported, are reinforced by sentiments and the heart's emotions, by sensibility and imagination; so that, if possible, our heart and our flesh may come to exult in the living God. In facts your life is rooted. To use another figure, on facts it is founded. These two ideas are combined in one passage of the Apostle: *radicati et fundati*, "That, being rooted and founded in charity, you may be able to comprehend." [1]

There is the fact of the Incarnation. There is the fact of the Real Presence of Our Lord upon the altar. There is the triple great fact, which wraps you round and round, nay, puts you where you are; that is to say: What you are, Whence you come, Whither you go. Facts are the contents of our faith. Around them the whole life of the Church revolves. For facts, not for opinions, millions of martyrs have died—yes, for facts not seen by the eyes, the unseen God being apprehended as if seen.[2]

A great fact, belonging to divine faith, expands the mind; and its attractions drawing the heart after it will change the course of a life, like one of those impulses which make a man out of a boy. It is so that the life of religious consecration comes to be instituted and maintained in the Church. "Rooted," said the Apostle; "planted," says the psalmist, "in the house of the Lord," the soul flourishes in the courts of the house of our God; and the just one grows up like the cedar of Libanus.[3] A fact of divine

[1] Eph. 3. 17, 18. [2] Hebr. 11. 27. [3] Ps. 91. 13, 14.

faith will act upon the soul as one such fact, that of the Real Presence on the altar, has operated on all Europe. For the sentiments of Christendom and its reason have blossomed into art and science, into architecture, sculpture and painting, to house in Christian temples the highest Object, which it is man's privilege to worship, and worshipping to lodge worthily on earth. Divine service in gorgeous temples has been to eager souls like a golden vase replenished by God with the joy of His grace: "Drink and be inebriated, my dearly beloved."[1] As St. Paul expressed it: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope and in the power of the Holy Ghost";[2] and this he said in relation to the great fact of the Incarnation, in the knowledge of which the soul exulting is replenished with all joy and peace.

One fact can make a man of you. The appreciation of God's presence, of grace inflowing, of the living present with all its capacities, of eternity and all its consequences, of life divided from death by that thin partition which we are leaning against from hour to hour—all these truths, and other such eternal verities, may or may not raise a flutter in our sensibilities; but to Christian reason they impart in anticipation the stability of life eternal, *in spe*, in hope, if not yet *in re*, in values actually delivered. This is what is meant by being "rooted and founded in charity." It is only such facts that survive when the dark night of mystical experiences has descended, when dusk deepens into blankness, and fear seizes on one, and trembling; and all his bones are affrighted.[3] In the horrors of Our Lord's Passion, the one stay of His humanity was the fact, who He was, and why He was suffering. All the rest, honour,

[1] Cant. 5. 1. [2] Rom. 15. 13. [3] Job 4. 14.

health, life, fell away. Earth gave Him only what it had, our woes; and with them for His portion He breathed His life into the hands of His Father.

* * *

BENJAMIN. Oh, the luxury of thinking, while gazing at the sky and the panorama around—drinking in truth, communicating with the infinite perfections of God through everything He has made! It is like a perpetual communion.

ST. VICTOR. You mean that in your meditations you find God, whom you feel for through the screen of His effects. That is correct enough. But let me insinuate that thoughts and their expression should be defined and precise. It is only the revelation of prophecy and high mysticism that runs so clearly beyond the orbit of all experience as to find no provision made for it in the vehicle of common language; and there it is admissible, since nothing else is possible, to mingle and fuse the phrases devised for things seen, and endeavour to convey the facts of a world unseen.

In subjects which are not outside of our competency, in philosophy and theology, which generations of the acutest and profoundest philosophers have defined, distinguished and explained, we cannot improve the matter by handling it roughly and in the gross; and we cannot improve the manner or terms of that scholastic language which, as De Quincey said of it, runs in a style "confluent with the matter."—Now there is a good deal of this going on, of manipulating terms, and committing piratical depredations at the expense of Christian, philosophical and scientific thought and language.

BENJAMIN. Oh, I have seen that! Minds void of faith are full of confusion with respect to eternal

truths. They don't know where to put anything; they have no place for things. I heard some one in the park say one day: "At least, Catholics know what they believe, and we do not." So, when confusion expresses itself, it is not strange there should be a strange medley of words.

St. Victor. In terms of speech, and in terms of life! The abuse of terms in speech, so that you don't know what people mean, may be owing to ignorance; but it may also be owing to malice. Of modernistic tactics in this line St. Jerome wrote to St. Augustine, fifteen centuries ago, pointing to the fraud, by which the wrong kind of teaching stole into the Church because the wrong kind of people stole into the posts of teachers and kept disguised: "Let us endeavour," said he, "to eliminate from the Church that pernicious heresy, which puts on the air of penitence, in order to have the right of teaching in the Church; for, did it show itself to the light, it would be expelled and die." At the very beginning of Christianity St. Jude observed: "Some men have crept in secretly . . . denying the only sovereign ruler and Our Lord Jesus Christ." [1]

* * *

Benjamin. When saints have prayed for "the perfection of faith," it could not mean that they experienced doubts? For how could high prayer be supported on a shaking basis of truth?

St. Victor. To pray for the perfection of faith denotes only the great fact that faith is a contingent property of our minds, as everything else about us is; that faith is capable of an intenser fixity, as the firmest nail may still be driven deeper in the wall; or that it might be shaken till it wobbled and was

[1] Jude 4.

displaced, like everything else which is contingent.

Benjamin. Contingent! That seems a strange word to qualify faith, which is imposed on us as distinctly necessary.

St. Victor. Precisely; its necessity is enforced, and itself is imposed as a moral obligation, because it is a mental quality which can come and go, and is therefore contingent, as depending on our good will. Contingent is that which is accessory, which may be or not be in a given subject. For all our acquired qualities the subject is our mind, will and memory, which crave to be adorned with habits of virtue, but are susceptible of the opposite habits, or vices. Faith is one such quality, a habit of the noblest order, having its opposite in the habit of infidelity, which is a vice. The surface of our intellectual soul, which reflects divine truths, is like a mirror; it can not only reflect, but also suffer the blemish of a passing breath. If roughly handled, the mirror may be scratched. It may be broken. In the case of a rational virtue, such a broken surface can be repaired and reconstituted. Only they say that a wilful sin of infidelity, even when properly retracted, does never leave the soul in the simplicity of faith which had been enjoyed before. This we see in our physical organism. A wound is healed; but there is left a scar, and perhaps a twitching or jerking there ever after. The cornea of an eye may be lost by a destructive inflammation; when renewed by nature's recuperative vigour, it is not so transparent again, but gives a different tinge to objects as seen by that eye.

Benjamin. To speak for myself I must say, everything is so bright all round the horizon of faith! There is never a cloud there.

St. Victor. Every one has his limitations, which

however need not come from the corruptions of vice. They are traced by what is called our human frailty; which means low visibility in the atmosphere of our intelligence, flabbiness in the movements of our will, restlessness and caprice in the sensibilities, which are jumping up to snatch or to snarl. Here are four departments in the psychology of our moral state: the mind, the will, the concupiscible sense catching at things all round, and the irascible starting up in arms when baulked. The two latter are like dogs that kennel in the sensibilities and, even when sleeping in the most innocent, can still growl and threaten to awake. We do awaken them and call them into play, especially by means of our sight, which is the faculty of all faculties for determining the character of our activities. A glance of your eye at an object may not quite set the curs a-whelping. A look easily may. But a stare can rouse the whole chorus of yelpers, who then will haunt you in your dreams; as Claudian said of Proserpine:

Omnia quae sensu volvuntur vota diurno
Pectore sopito reddit amica quies,

"All the desires you harbour by day come trooping back in the quiet of slumber."

With such strains and stresses trying the moral system, there is a limit in every one, and a term set to every virtue in every one, beyond which limit the virtue will not stand any further stress. There is a weakest link to every chain. Since an essential connection of mutual dependance runs through all solid virtues, the whole system will get out of gear if the weakest part gives way. But God will never try that link beyond what it can bear. He tempers the wind to the shorn lamb. It is the person's own want of circumspection, it is the itching of curiosity and

the bewitching of trifles,[1] it is imprudence, carelessness, rashness, that carry a person beyond his margin of safety.

Not but that the feeble soul of many a dilettante who was lolling on a sofa has been called in times of persecution to come out and do the heroic, and from an idler becomes a hero or heroine in enduring. In such a case, it is God who goes before, and provides with the temptation an issue that is successful;[2] and the dilettante becomes a hero.

[1] Wisd. 4. 12. [2] 1 Cor. 10. 13.

Chapter VII

CONTEMPLATION

Benjamin. Some people object to the whole idea of prayer as the occupation of a life. What is the use, they ask, of a contemplative life which does not go forth in the active service of one's neighbour?

St. Victor. The objection proceeds from not understanding what the value of work and life consists in. The essential value of what we do and of the life we live lies in its relation to God. He is the term of reference. He is the theatre. He is the audience. It is an enlightened intention of what you are aiming at that fixes your value in work and life. That determines your utility in existence; for otherwise of what use is it to gain the whole world which is not necessary to you, if you miss the one thing which is? Don't mind much, said St. Augustine, what a man is doing, but see what he is looking to when he is doing it; and St. Ambrose: You will be doing in effect only as much as you have a mind to, *Quantum intendis tantum facies*. That is to say, the value of life, what it counts for and can purchase in eternity, depends upon its scope and intention more than upon the occupation. For you might be running well, but be off the road.

Put yourself under the eye of God, to know and be known, to walk before Him and be perfect. This is like that instinct which lines the inside of the tabernacle with gold; making it beautiful outside indeed, but much more so within. It is a life of intense vitality and sensitiveness to God's eye and opinion;

as some one yesterday was remorseful for having approached Holy Communion with a garment out of repair, which no one could possibly have noticed but Our Lord. It is this interior life which gives force and efficacy to all exterior works in Christ's kingdom. It exercises a supernatural leverage on His Providence over the world, which He is willing should be affected and guided by the power of lives dedicated to the knowledge and love of Him. The contemplative life is represented by the sword of gold, which the prophet Jeremias handed to Judas Machabeus. Of keen edge, of metal precious and therefore weighty to penetrate, it was guaranteed to "overthrow," said the prophet, "the adversaries of my people Israel." [1]

Other matters are of secondary importance, unless they are intended to dilate God's glory. Then they pass into the first rank, their force and value being derived from the intention; as, when you eat or drink or do anything else for the honour of God, you invest the act with the character and merit of religion. In the most ordinary duties of life you may be administering God's grace, dispensing His treasures, and speaking the speeches of God.[2] This is God's own good made diffusive through you; it is a divine opulence in you overflowing for Him, whether it wells up in the enclosed garden of contemplation and prayer, or spreads itself abroad in the active life over the thirsty plains of humanity. Both kinds of life are for the healing of the nations. Thy belongings, says the dramatist, are not thine own so proper as to spend thyself upon thy virtues, and thy virtues on thee. "Wisdom that is hid, and treasure that is not seen—what profit is there in them both?" It is only the fool that is commended

[1] 2 Mach. 15. 15, 16 [2] 1 Pet. 4. 10, 11.

for not making use of what is in him: "Better is the man that hideth his folly than the man that hideth his wisdom." [1]

Benjamin. There is many a pious person who fears the cares of the active life, because they derange the even tenor of the interior.

St. Victor. Well, there is nothing to say against such fears, provided they point to a great vocation and do not originate in a kind of indolence. It is indolence when people don't want to get unsettled out of their cozy corner, and out of their daily round, everything being adjusted to their own precious liking, and nothing particularly to other persons' likings or necessities. Father Faber observed, it is just what persons need, to get unsettled a little. You see this in religious and intellectual affairs generally, in science, and what is called modern thought. People who have no wish to be persuaded will invoke all kinds of probabilities, imaginings and impossibilities, to save themselves from getting unsettled and, for mercy's sake! from having to believe what they have no wish to believe. They must save their household gods, in the midst of which they have grown up, and, when their Troy is burning about them, they will run off with their gods in their wallets.

Also in practical matters one may become wooden like a selfish bachelor, who lives and dies for his cosy, glorious self. Doubtless there are good people abroad who are not called upon to be hunters and fishers in God's kingdom, to go out for souls and look after God's ragged intellectuals, or His poor that are in tatters. Still that is no reason for making everything suit only the convenience and time-table of one's private devotions. "Cast thy bread

[1] Ecclus. 20. 32, 33.

upon the running waters," [1] as the stream of humanity flows by so rapidly, never to return.

* * *

Benjamin. The trouble is that all these pious "works," with the running about, the talking and the agitating,—not to mention the wearing out by fatigue—all this activity keeps one bustling in the midst of things, persons, and a litter of distractions.

St. Victor. Activity, and immense zeal spent on everybody except oneself, may indeed be a sign of shallowness; or, at least, be a cause of it. Still things have to be done in this world, or they will remain undone. Your money won't do them, if there is nobody there besides. Only there must be a proportion between *negotium justum*, the right measure of business, and *otium sanctum*, the retirement of holy repose—that "time of leisure," says Holy Writ, by which "the wisdom of a scribe cometh"; "and he that is less in action shall receive wisdom." [2] Don't draw too much grist to your mill; nor profess the pragmatical gospel of doing instead of being; as some proclaim loudly, "Work is my religion." That will do for the oil lamp which burns in the corridor, and burns out, lighting up others and using up itself. But it will not do for a man. He has to save himself, and thereby serve others; for, "he that is evil to himself, to whom will he be good?" [3]

Here you have a great secret, which underlies the whole life of retirement and contemplation. St. Chrysostom tells us of it; that, however retired one may be, still his virtue of itself is catching. He who is mild and modest and merciful and just really never keeps these excellent qualities to himself, but is shedding their beneficence upon others. The

[1] Eccles. 11. 1. [2] Ecclus. 38. 25. [3] *Ibid.*, 14. 5.

presence and contact of virtue is life for the healing of the nations. It is like the invisible soul itself, which is perfectly visible in its moral influences, yea, in its physical activity. For, though invisible, it is seen well enough in the face, action and movements. What more invisible than God, whom no man can see and live? Yet Incarnate and visible He was still God, and visibly full of the Godhead's grace and truth. And not only the Incarnate Word, but God the Father was visible, as Our Lord told Philip: "He that seeth Me seeth the Father also. How sayest thou, Show us the Father?" [1] Thus, when you see a person instinct with divine grace, and acting under the impulse of it, his fingers dripping with myrrh, you are looking at the Author of Grace, who is never separate from the grace which He imparts. That is one reason why I have heard you often say, that not only all things are so bright to you, but that everything is speaking God to you. It was a gracious thought of a poet to make inanimate nature itself recognize the Lord in the disguise of His humanity and blush into wine, on occasion of the nuptials at Cana:

> The conscious waters saw their Lord and blushed.

In the matter of virtue, and the action of it on one's fellow men, the very least effect produced is that of arresting evil, and, like salt, preserving from further corruption. "You are the salt of the earth." [2] Hence the life of active influence is never wanting to the spirit of devotion, even though the latter is retired in a cell. The perfume of Christ's garden cannot fail to make itself perceptible.

BENJAMIN. Of charity in its more active and aggressive kind I have had more than enough. It

[1] John 14. 9. [2] Matt. 5. 13.

has left me no inclination to resume hostilities against the powers of this lower air.

St. Victor. The Spirit breathes where He will. The most temperate exercise of out-door zeal fails to attract some souls, and many souls, whom God calls to contemplation and to a life more intimately in union with Him. Your objections are not really directed against the active life.

But they have full weight, if they challenge the substitution of external work for inner faith and religion and piety. There is such a thing at present as the substitution of sociology for religion. Once upon a time they preached faith without works. Now they preach works without faith. "Work is my religion," they say. See how people must go on one foot or the other; they are too good not to be doing something, and enjoying the luxury of doing some good. Recently, on occasion of a great National Mission which was being organized in England during the war, persons began to think, how much good the revival of religion might do in the line of promoting trade-boards, temperance, town-planning; and they submitted a memorial to the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury in that sense. He replied that the first thing was to create a Christian atmosphere for people to breathe in, by a strenuous attention to the principles of Christian faith. Then wrong would right itself everywhere, if the instructed conscience founded its wisdom on the humble recognition of the divine.

In the *Homiletic Review* of New York, Professor Matthews a while ago deprecated the promotion of that surreptitious interest in religion which substitutes sociological discussions for the expounding of truth. Maundering about interest in some general society of mankind as a whole will never build up

the inner life of individuals, who alone make up society, and for whose benefit social life exists. Let philanthropical societies take care of philanthropy.

For the moral structure of the individual, moral virtues are necessary. These personal endowments of the mind and heart are nominally mere natural qualifications to be acquired by a good will. But, in point of fact, they have never been acquired by men and have never blossomed throughout society except in the practice of supernatural religion, as the whole history of paganism and naturalism has shown us. It is the personal relation with God by faith, hope and charity, that introduces the whole world of efficient moral virtue; and the first moral virtue which they introduce in vigorous development is precisely that of religion, or the proper observance of our relations to God. After that, it is easy to set all things right in general society. For the greatest among the three dominant virtues of faith, hope and charity, is the last named, charity; which, regarding God first, comprises man next; and, being *major non sola*, the greater among the virtues, not the only one, introduces all in its train, to supplement each with the rest.

* *

Benjamin. That is where the gift of contemplation makes everything else easy.

St. Victor. I don't think that reflection is a very exalted one—to get great things like contemplation, in order to make other things easy; to live on the gift of an income which you don't earn in order to go jaunting about the world of the spirit. That is not God's way; who never pierces the clouds with the manifestation of His Spirit, except to honour a man with "a strong conflict," that the soul by fight-

ing may overcome, and overcoming may appreciate how wisdom is stronger than all else. This is part of the "profit" which God intends in all His gifts, that man may go prospered in his labours, not that the labours should be taken off his hands to be done by some one else, or left undone.[1]

BENJAMIN. But time passes, and what is attained? And amid so many great things what do we understand?

ST. VICTOR. So might the little cup say, that it will never get the ocean in. But enough of cupfuls would do it. It is God's purpose that little beings should do great things in their own little way. All that we do on earth or think of in contemplating heaven we have to take time for, and let it find room for itself in due sequence. So shall it be hereafter, in the new heavens and the new earth, where we shall not cease to be human beings, doing things piecemeal and in our own way. But, if we do things piecemeal and consecutively, we are not therefore shallow and superficial. In the spiritual life least of all, and in the steady development of grace. For here there are two minds, one of them being divine and insinuating itself into the other. The Spirit of Understanding takes up His abode in holy souls, makes them friends of God and commends them for gifts not their own.[2] With such a Spirit possessing us, holy, one and manifold, subtle and sure, sweet and irresistible, there is no fear of our not understanding the beginnings and endings of things, light and darkness, good and evil.[3] Yet it is all in our own human way—never unnatural.

BENJAMIN. You gave me to understand that the natural capacity or ability of a soul determines in some way the grade of supernatural elevation, and

[1] Wisd. 10. 12; 1 Cor. 12. 7. [2] Wisd. 7. 14. [3] *Ibid.*, 7. 14–27.

therefore of eternal glory. I thought it was only the election of divine love which influenced a vocation.

St. Victor. The natural capacities which God has given are part of the capital which His grace finds to work with, and develop love in, and crown with glory. Those natural qualities are, to say the least, a fund of possibilities. They purvey material for the mind and heart. So do you see in the outer senses, that a man with two eyes has occasions forced on him for knowing and loving God, such as a blind man has not. One with ears is better off than a deaf man, and still more than a deaf mute, to whom the social world and its ready means of communication are closed. Those are all "talents," you see, to work with: "Trade till I come," says the Lord.[1] Yet, amid such diversities of talents among men, there is not a simple uneducated person of whom you may not have occasion to say: "*Minor, non pejor*"; that he is indeed in a lower class, *minor;* but that, if he makes up with intensity of divine love, he is far from being worse off, *pejor.* He may have the merit of a St. Thomas Aquinas or of a St. Bonaventure.

All those natural opportunities, advantages or talents, are not the man; they are only factors in the making of a man. For the art of living aright, which Aristotle considered to be wisdom in practice, he required three such factors: first, natural capacity or talents; then instruction or study; finally, practice or experience. St. Jerome, writing to Paulinus, cited the ancient Greeks for three elements in every art from grammar up to astronomy; dogma, he wrote, that is, the rules of the thing; the method to be followed, lest you waste your time in ventures out of your own head; then the drilling of practice.

[1] Luke 19. 13.

In the particular matter of acquiring spiritual perfection, Hugh of St. Victor distinguishes four steps, since he introduces prayer as one necessary means. He says there is first reading or instruction, which he calls doctrine; secondly, meditation and direction; thirdly, prayer for divine assistance; fourthly, putting in practice what you have learnt.

It is for yourself to do all that, with God; not for God to do it without you. This is living the truth; and it is living in the light of truth. It is the light of contemplation shining on the minutest matters of practical life and resulting in perfection. All the practices conducing to this result are like chemicals in the soil; they have only gone to the growth of the plant; like water, sunlight and air, they have sought to develop it. Like our corn, wine, and meat, they are not the life and strength of the body, but they enable the living subject to live on and grow strong. *Accipe et redde, da et accipe*, "Take and give back, give and take," is the law of the Kingdom. And so every one, however limited in his opportunities or his talents, can reach the highest degrees in the Kingdom of God.

It is remarkable, however, that when any special work has had to be done in the Church, divine Providence has usually supplied, by special illumination, for what nature or opportunity had denied. The simplest people have become doctors, with funds of the soundest learning. Not that it is difficult for the simple to become illuminated. The pure-minded easily graduate into complex truth, by a connatural fitness for divine things. And so the same Hugh observes of the beatific vision, that the Blessed shall see God as He is; but they shall not see Him because they were poor in spirit here; or because they were meek, or because they mourned, etc.;

still less because they were learned. They shall see Him because they were clean of heart. "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." [1]

* * *

BENJAMIN. But some ask, why make so much of nature, when grace is so efficacious?

ST. VICTOR. Efficacious in nature; not without it. They might as well ask, why make so much of man in the world? Isn't God enough?

BENJAMIN. They add, there is no comparison between nature and grace. Nature is but earth.

ST. VICTOR. Yes, as in a flower pot, with a seed in it. So St. John says of us: The seed of God abideth in him.[2] See what comes of it. Look at that miserable garden vase, and the ragged bush coming out of it. But what is hanging on the paltry thing? A dozen fine lemons in different stages of maturity! Or again nature is like the drop of water put into the wine of the Holy Sacrifice. It becomes wine.

BENJAMIN. Or all grace?

ST. VICTOR. No! It is only nature transformed. When iron has become all aglow with fire, the iron is still there. Or the glow would not be there. In all these divine things which concern our moral perfection, the one substance is the man with his personality. He alone walks on the solid earth. Grace does not walk. It is a vesture. It is a quality which purifies and etherealizes.

When they speak of grace as being efficacious enough, of its being sufficient, they seem to be thinking of some airy mystic life, like that experience of the prophet Habacuc, who was caught up by the hair of his head, whisked through the nether regions of the air, and landed in the den of his fellow prophet, Daniel.

[1] Matt. 5. 8. [2] 1 John 3. 9.

BENJAMIN. Is that a picture of the mystic life?

ST. VICTOR. You see one in the air, and the other in a den of lions; both dominating natural conditions in a way not to be desired, nor asked for. How would you like the experiences of that other young prophet, Joseph? God wanted to prepare a place in Egypt for Israel, so He had the boy sold; then, from being a slave, raised to be grand steward of Putiphar's palace; then sunk into a dungeon, and utterly forgotten. Now he was safe enough to be placed on a pinnacle. He was made lord of Egypt, at that time one of the great empires of the world. That is what you are aspiring to.

BENJAMIN. No, thank you! I keep to the beaten path.

ST. VICTOR. Yes, keep to the ascetic life, as all the highest mystics do. It is there God finds them, experts in ascetic perfection. If He wants them for other things, He will temper them with mystic perfection. He would want souls oftener, if only they lent themselves, and laid themselves open to His influences.

* * *

BENJAMIN. I'll stand in the ancient ways—put up with the nature which God has given, and which you extol as the substantive basis of perfection.

ST. VICTOR. It is the basis for that life of moral practice and exercise, called asceticism. In Greek, the word, "*askesis*", means exercise, application, self-habituation, the life and rules of athletes. Applied to spirituality, the same word under the form of "asceticism" designates all the exercises of prayer and meditation; as well as control of the sensitive nature and of the imagination. It signifies the tempering and application of the mind and will to their proper work in life; and the education of all

other faculties to habits of good conduct, that they assist the work of the spirit and do not trammel it. It is said of St. Bernard in the Breviary that "he exercised himself wonderfully in fasting and meditation." That is the idea of asceticism, exercising oneself. At the same time, Bernard became one of the great mystics in the Church's history. The Saints, who are the heroes of Christianity, have been very noticeable for one thing, that is, how uniformly they showed the genius of industry, and an infinite capacity for taking pains, in all matters and practices of ethical and spiritual life.

The ingenuity and industry of the world in quite other directions, and the enterprise of the world's intellectuals in shirking God's kingdom and belittling God's Saints, cannot compare with the genius and industry of these great souls in minding the one thing necessary, and making themselves what they ought to be, even at the cost of setting the teeth of intellectuals on edge.

BENJAMIN. It seems very dry to be spinning out truths for oneself in meditation. It is as if a hungry man held a disquisition about his dinner, instead of eating it. On the contrary, the simple look of contemplation feasts the soul.

ST. VICTOR. Still the higher is not reached except by steps from the lower. If you will listen to Wisdom and wear out her threshold, the Wise Man shows whither and how she will lead you. He says: If any one hearken to Wisdom, the first thing is, that she walks with him in temptation; she brings fear and dread and trial upon him; she scourges him with the affliction of her discipline until, having tried him by her laws, she can trust his soul. This is the first stage of the process; it is purification. Then she strengthens him, and makes the path straight for

him. This is the way of illumination in the sunlight, and the process of manifold culture in virtue. Finally, she gives him joy, and discloses her secrets to him, and heaps upon him treasures of wisdom and understanding.[1] Here she has finished the process, bringing the soul to union with its Maker. This is in all cases the spirit of intimate and familiar prayer and contemplation; and, if God chooses, it is also the open door to the infused gifts of the mystical life.

The soul's part in all this process is summed up in the one word, Religion, which binds it to God by a threefold duty, a triple cord not easily broken: first, to acknowledge God by praise and devotion; secondly, to show Him honour in body and soul; and, thirdly, to serve Him by obedience, in union with His will. Then a man is himself, and finished.

* * *

Benjamin. That's a poor ideal! To be himself!

St. Victor. A poor ideal! What else was he made for but to be a man? Godlike, yes! and therefore the more a man! He is like a machine which is going in all its parts without jerking, jarring or jamming; morally speaking, like his own physical body, in which hundreds of nerves and sinews get to work at any instant, and nothing scrapes or rasps or jolts. Full-breasted and full-breathed, using all his spiritual powers with agility and facility, he is becoming what he is meant to be finally, and what you are going to be.

Benjamin. What is that?

St. Victor. A Saint.

Benjamin. Oh, yes!

[1] Ecclus. 4. 18–21.

ST. VICTOR. That is wholly a man, every inch of him; not half-and-half, that is, half divine by God's gift, half otherwise, by his own; his soul a little less than the angels on one side; and on the other,—well! what the poet said, who doubted about

> The merits of a spotless shirt,
> A dapper boot—a little hand—
> If half the little soul is dirt.

Half of him can be "express and admirable," as Shakespeare describes; and half, as Osee puts it, can be made abominable like the things he loves.[1] No, he was meant to be godlike, that is, wholly a man. God Himself became one of us to show what man may become. Our humanity affords the Divinity an extension of goodness, by allowing the white light of the Infinite to be shown in a thousand tints of little human ways; and it gives expression to the divine in a thousand lisping syllables of affections, terms and works of virtue. It is then we show what we are when we show the divine that is in us. Pagan nature aspired to this.

For instance, Seneca in his preface to *Natural Science Questions* exclaims: *O quam contempta res est homo, nisi supra humana surrexerit!* Oh, how contemptible a thing is man, unless he rises above humanity! This philosopher has just asked with much anxiety: "Who is the author and guardian of the world? What is God? Is He wrapt up in Himself, or does He sometimes look at us? Does He do something every day, or has He done with it once for all? Is He part of the world, or is He the world itself? May He decree something, and do so to-day, and alter the law of the fates, or would it be a reflection on His majesty, and a confession of error, to

[1] Osee 9. 10.

have done and now to undo? For only certain things, and those ever the same can please Him, whom nothing can please unless it be the best; and yet He is none the less free or mighty for that. For He Himself is His own necessity. Unless I were admitted to the contemplation of these things, it was not worth my while to be born. . . . Take away this inestimable good, and life is not worth sweating for, and fretting about, *Vita non est tanti ut sudem, ut æstuem.* O how contemptible a thing is man, if he does not raise himself above humanity!" If we are to be tied down to human things by affections and passions, I do not see what any one has to pride himself on; for, continues Seneca, the best of us, where all are ill, is only the one who is not worse, "*qui robustior est in valetudinario.*" Here you see, Benjamin, this Stoic philosopher has touched all the chords of thought and life, of contemplation which allures to brighter worlds, and of moral action, which follows in the way. "*Beati immaculati in via:* Blessed are they who are spotless in the way!" [1]

Ultimately it is this action of our moral life, and of becoming perfect even as our heavenly Father is perfect,[2] that is the end of all our philosophy, as Epictetus, who was of the Cynic school, said: "Dare to look up to God and say: Use me for the future for what Thou wilt. I am of one mind with Thee; I am Thine. I repine at none of Thy decrees; lead where Thou wilt." This is perfection in life.

* * *

Benjamin. But how do you reach the perfection of thought—from mere meditative reflection on things about you to the quiet of divine contemplation?

[1] Ps. 118. 1. [2] Matt. 5. 48.

St. Victor. Very simply, by reasonable steps. The mind begins with the things it sees, and just as it sees them in the light of its sensitive faculties: *In imaginatione et secundum imaginationem.* It proceeds to things, not merely as seen but as understood—the order, design, providence governing visible creation: *In imaginatione et secundum rationem.* It advances to higher truths of intelligence, which imagination cannot portray, but still can play with by means of similitudes or concrete images of some kind; for how otherwise could it deal in a sensitive way with the abstract ideas of virtue, beauty, power, and the like?—*In ratione et secundum imaginationem.* After this, imagination and the resources of sensitive perception failing altogether, let them crouch in a corner and keep still, while the intellect goes forward on its own account to contemplate pure spiritual being in its own essence, as, for instance, that of your own soul: *In ratione et secundum rationem.* Further, it reaches to those subjects of revelation, which are God's being and attributes; for by the analogies of things created our mind steps up to the realities of the Uncreated and the Infinite: *Supra rationem sed non præter rationem.* Finally, the highest efforts of contemplation are upon those subjects of revelation which we penetrate so little, that at most our reason can only show them to involve no contradiction, as, for instance, the mystery of the Blessed Trinity: *Supra rationem et præter rationem.*

Benjamin. What a privilege this, to have time and facilities for diving into such depths!

St. Victor. Here are six levels of contemplative thought and grace, as Richard of St. Victor has surveyed them in the progress of the spirit. But at what point in this development of meditating on

divine truths, and contemplating divine mysteries, the soul may find its acquired habits of contemplation gently merged in the mystic life of infused contemplation, that is for Him alone to determine, who rains grace from the clouds, and relieves the soul in its labours. You see, however, that soon enough the soul will have acquired its own habits of contemplation, looking at God, at Our Lord's Humanity, and at divine mysteries generally. Such simplicity of look, which is a characteristic of childhood's straightforward gaze and candour, comes back as an acquisition of mature years, when the divine philosophy of habitual contemplation has made the soul quiet, settled and deep.

Benjamin. You have given six degrees of contemplation, which rises with its objects to six levels of truth. What about that other degree, emerging from the speculations of some people, with whom certain objects of intelligence are pronounced to be, not merely above reason and beyond, but simply against it?

St. Victor. There is no such degree except with Idealists, and persons who carp at all truth, and leave nothing to carp at. Such a thing as the contradictory of reason and common sense enters neither into the region of knowledge, nor into that of faith. For observe! Many objects of knowledge are simply matters of fact which yield up their truth to the natural activity of our understanding, as you see in the domain of all science, whatever be its kind; and natural theology is not excluded. In this field of natural observation there is nothing contrary to reason, though much which reason cannot explain. Many other matters of knowledge belong not to science but to faith human or divine, which reposes on the witness and word of man, or on

the word of God. Whatever God witnesses to and reveals is always in harmony with our reason, even when raised far above it. That there should be things far beyond the ken of our reason to probe is shown in all human faith, and in human science. The most materialistic of sciences and scientists do not pretend to explain facts which they expound, both within their proper ambit and beyond. We hear the word constantly passed round: We don't know how; we don't know why; but there it is! In the same way, many sublime things of divine revelation may be impervious to our reason; but they are not therefore contradictory to it.

In divine things, therefore, there is no such degree as that of truths which are contrary to our intelligence. But, if you insist on having another grade of truth in the objects of divine contemplation, I will give you a seventh; only it comes before the other six, not after them. It is that of Common Sense, and what common sense sees and feels and knows. "I saw it with my own eyes!" we say, clinching an argument; and there's an end of it. In our religious intelligence we never lose the bearings of good sense.

* * *

Benjamin. As to our inquisitiveness in thought, and our restlessness in action, Lessius gives a reason for both. He says: "All things are in motion, because all things are after good; and all are seeking Thee. Since things are the radiance of God's own goodness, it is no wonder we should all be in movement after them."

St. Victor. *Omnia bonum appetunt.* All things are after good. But, without God, good does not exist on earth or in heaven. Nay, without God you have nothing. And you too would be nothing. Let

me ask you a question which Balmes proposes: What would remain in this universe if you were to disappear?

BENJAMIN. I suppose, everything except myself.

ST. VICTOR. But, if the Creator asked Himself that question: What would remain?

BENJAMIN. Nothing!

ST. VICTOR. I stood on the meridian at Greenwich Observatory. You know what my bearings were at that moment, in astronomical terms? I was nowhere: 0°0′0″—having no degree, minute or second of my own, but being out of all categories and nowhere! God is out of all categories for precisely the contrary reason; He comprises them all. He is the One and All, the fulness of truth and reality, from which all the categories of substance and accident proceed by His free creation. If He is there, creation need not be a zero. He puts the unit before its naughts and nothingness, before its infinity of zeros, giving them the value of myriads of millions in reality, in being and activity, thanks to the unit of the Divine Nature which is before all, and which alone can say: "I am who am," and of which we say: "He who is." [1] Without Him in our being, our life and our knowledge, we are a zero with a vengeance: 0°0′0″! So when the pagan philosopher Empedocles was asked: What was life worth living for? he answered, as the Latin verses express it:

Ut astra
Aspiciam. Cœlum subtrahe, nullus ero,

"To see the skies. Take heaven away, and I am nowhere!" The Wise Man closes a gorgeous description of God's providence with the exclamation: "We shall say much, but it will be of no avail; and the sum of our words is: 'Tis He that is all!" [2]

[1] Exod. 3. 14. [2] Ecclus. (LXX), 43. 27.

BENJAMIN. What is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou visitest him?—particularly when he is animated by such a little soul!

ST. VICTOR. What do you mean by a little soul? One less than another? Well! yet not therefore little. The least is to be rated in the terms of the Divinity which it is to inherit on entering into the joy of its Lord.[1] A soul does but enter into its own when it enters into the divinity: "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and my cup; it is Thou that wilt restore my inheritance to me";[2] and for this it holds the bond, *in spe*, against the day when it shall enter into its rights *in re;* as St. Paul says: "I know whom I have believed, and I am certain that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him, against that day."[3] It is by these substantial rights that the substantial being of the soul is to be rated and valued.

Granted that star differs from star, in comparison one with another. Still the value of a soul in relation to God is not comparative, as being one-half, one fifth, one-tenth of some other soul's value; but absolute, as having reference to Himself alone, before whom the greatest star or soul is but a nonentity save in Him. The least has the same relation to Him as the greatest. Granted that the value of a 100 franc note is not that of 1,000 francs. Nevertheless, the value of 100 does not depend on the 1,000. And the shrewd householder knows perfectly well how to take care of his 100 no less than of his 1,000—whether in the same or in different pockets of his portfolio.

BENJAMIN. How can we know the value of a soul?

ST. VICTOR. Comparatively? We know nothing

[1] Matt. 25. 23. [2] Ps. 15. 5. [3] 2 Tim. 1. 12.

at all about it. Absolutely? We know a good deal. We hear Him say: "My son, give Me thy heart." [1] There is a warrant for possessing Him; and your value—the title to be divine: "I have said it: You are gods, and all of you the sons of the Most High." [2]

But do you ask, what is your soul in comparison with God? Why then, look at it and see the sign that is upon it.[3] Use it as a stepping-stone, and you will find yourself reaching God. This is what the psalmist says, bidding us transcend ourselves by contemplation. His way of saying it, however, is in Hebrew, "pouring himself forth over himself." Just see what comes of it.

He represents himself as panting after God, even like the hart which panteth after the fountains of water; and his soul as weeping at the daily taunt: Where is thy God? He says: "These things I remembered, and I poured out my soul over me." That is, as Bellarmine explains, I rose in contemplation and transcended my soul itself; and thereby "I shall go over to the place of the wonderful tabernacle, even to the house of God." [4] Indeed, there is no course for ascending to the tabernacle of wonders and the house of God more direct than our own soul, which is the image of God. For it is sublimer than the heavens, and profounder than the abyss. He who knows how to contemplate his own soul and to transcend it, raising himself above himself in solitude and peace,[5] such a one will reach the model and exemplar of his soul, penetrating into the admirable tabernacle and the very home of God.

* * *

BENJAMIN. Show me the way to do this!

ST. VICTOR. A difficult matter! Who shall ascend

[1] Prov. 23. 26 [2] Ps. 81. 6. [3] *Ibid.* 4. 7.
[4] *Ibid.* 41. 2–5. [5] Jerem. Lam. 3. 28.

into the mountain of the Lord? Who shall dispose his heart to mount by steps? Blessed is he![1]

The steps of this ascent in contemplation are: First, the soul is a spirit, surpassing all bodily things. God too is a spirit, the Creator of things spiritual and corporeal, and transcending them far.

Secondly, the soul is simple and indivisible, having no parts, and therefore no extension. At the same time it is entire in the whole body, and whole in each part of the body, filling all the members, yet occupying no space on its own account. It is in space only so far as the members which it quickens are in place; and of them, being corporeal and extended, it is true what is said of all things composite:

> There is nothing situate under heaven's eye
> But hath its bounds in earth and sea and sky.

So too God is simple and indivisible; yet He fills the whole extension of this world, and all created things, everywhere present, everywhere entire, circumscribed nowhere, as a First Cause operating and sustaining, not as a soul which quickens by substantial union.

Thirdly, the soul is not set in motion by the body, but on the contrary bears the body up, actuates it, moves it, governs it, making it a body, and making it a live one; as is seen in death, when, the soul going away, the body falls away, losing motion, sense, form, and whatever good it had. Now, what the soul is to the body, that is God to the universe, not as its soul indeed, but as the immovable and unchangeable Being, bearing all else by the word of His power;[2] so that in Him we live, move and have our being.[3]

Fourthly, the soul is intelligent, and is all intellect,

[1] Ps. 23. 3; 83. 6. [2] Heb. 1. 3. [3] Acts 17. 28.

containing in an eminent degree the knowledge of all the senses, to which it supplies their specific powers; but it knows a world of things besides, where sense never reaches. Similarly, God is all intellect, containing in an eminent degree the knowledge of all men and angels, and an infinity besides, which passes our natural ken.

Fifthly, the soul does not only know many things in principle and theory, but also has an eye to work and practical effects; whence proceed so many products of human genius, wondrous effects in the various arts, in constructions, fountains, gardens, and endless other lines, so that man's handiwork seems to vie with the works of nature herself. In like manner are God's ideas and His works; without tools, without labour, without spelling things out in terms of time, He has put the whole universe in being, by the nod and fiat of His will. He spoke and things were, He commanded and they were created.[1]

Sixthly, the soul has free will, and moves as it chooses the members of the body, and many other things besides. So God with the greatest freedom dominates all created things; as David said: "All things serve Thee." [2]

Beyond all this, we may penetrate still deeper into the soul, to discover another and sublimer kinship with God; in as much as, being self-possessed, incommunicable and single in its personality, it comprises at the same time three great powers, which we call Memory, Understanding and Will. Herein it faintly bodies forth the Unity of the Divine Essence in the Trinity of Persons: first, the Eternal Intelligence; secondly, the Eternal Word engendered thereby and equal to it; and, thirdly, the mutual Love equal to the Intelligence and the Word.

[1] Ps. 148. 5. [2] Ps. 118. 91.

After this contemplation the psalmist proceeds: "Why art thou sad, O my soul? and why dost thou trouble me?" He has answered the taunt of God's enemies, and his own, who had sneered: "Where is thy God?" [1] Thus it is that the knowledge of ourselves opens up the knowledge of God; one deep calleth on a greater one—our ignorance on His wisdom, our misery on His mercy, and our empty heart on the fulness of His being.[2]

[1] Ps. 41. 4–6. [2] *Ibid.* 8.

Chapter VIII

BEAUTY AND TRUTH

Benjamin. How dull and commonplace our life and conceptions seem to be, while the spiritual atmosphere is so charged with grace and gifts and light! Faith, hope and charity have a right to burst forth in all the glory of those "vivid sentiments," which we pray for and give expression to in thanksgiving after Holy Communion. Indeed, thanksgiving seems to be the fittest setting for the noblest sentiments of the soul, and to rouse its latent devotion more than anything else.

St. Victor. Well, yes! Thanksgiving is a concentration of devotion, in which the essence of all life is distilled—repaying love divine with the choicest effusions of the spirit. *Da et accipe*, Give and take. The fruitful field of thanksgiving, so often lying fallow, needs but to be touched with our attention to burst into fruit. The Roman Senate observed this on one occasion, just after the soil of Italy had been freed from Hannibal's presence: "*Segnius homines bona quam mala sentire*, People are less sensitive to good things than to bad;" and no one bethought himself of giving thanks to the gods for the good things, for which all had been supplicating before. At once the Senate ordered that the shrines of the city should be thrown open for the prayer of thanksgiving during five days; and 120 choicest victims should be immolated.

Benjamin. The life of religious souls seems to show very specially that thanksgiving, and the

communication of giving and taking, merge most directly into the ideal life of personal dedication.

St. Victor. An essential condition of such internal activity in a life dedicated to God is to live in the present moment, where He is found. The past is dead, and you do not seek the living there. To the future we are not yet born, and we can do nothing there. Our business is here and now; or, as the poet says, "while we live to live." How many may be said not to live at all, but only to last!

* * *

Benjamin. I am immensely impressed with those thoughts about the value of a day, which skims along so lightly, but bears the fortunes of eternity.

St. Victor.

> The man
> Is yet unborn, who duly weighs an hour.

We are a breath that passeth away, and returneth not;[1] coming forth like a flower which withereth, fleeting like a shadow which continueth not.[2] The reason why time is so precious is not because of time itself, but because of the things that are in it; for time is only the measure of things within us and without, in terms of their succession. They are chasing one another—our thoughts, words and deeds; impressions are received, and reactions answer; and time is ever so full. Humanity itself is out on the chase after itself; the young, to whom their fathers gave existence, always pressing and ushering those same fathers out to the tomb. Now, ascribing to this race-course of time the qualifications of the race which is run in it, we load time with such

[1] Ps. 77. 39. [2] Job 14. 2.

attributes as you have just implied; even as the poet says that it

> Is the bud of being, the dim dawn,
> The twilight of our day, the vestibule.
> Life's theatre as yet is shut.

Benjamin. The longer it goes, the faster it flies. A while ago, three years were an age to one's immaturity. Now they are only an incident of business or correspondence.

St. Victor. If ravishing time becomes ever more fugitive, the truth which it flashes from everything becomes more and more distinct to the eye of age maturing. For everything as it whirls by yields an outer and an inner truth. The outer truth is that which is simply apprehended through any sensation by a cursory idea of our mind. For the matter of that, in mere surface show, we are ourselves only an image flitting.

The inner truth is the meaning, which an intelligence essays to comprehend in things. St. Augustine illustrates this by the case of a simpleton who gazes at a beautiful manuscript; he sees the letters, words, sentences; but he understands nothing of what they convey. A wise man comes by, and reads the thoughts as he runs. When the Spanish conquerors of the West Indies received letters from Europe, and read all the news imparted, the aborigines, who saw only black marks on the paper, imagined that the parchment must have been talking to their masters—so little did they see below the surface.

We ourselves are a great specimen of this outer truth, and an inner one. Outwardly, our bodily conditions are visible even to the eye of an insect; they abide, or change and break up from day to day, as any corporeal thing does. But with all this we

have a soul that flits not, corrodes not, remains one and the same during twenty, forty, eighty years; and we are possessing ourselves in the same personality with which we began life so long, long ago—having been, before that, nowhere.

BENJAMIN. Nowhere? Still in the mind of God.

ST. VICTOR. Whether in the mind of God then, seen and foreseen, or in our subjective existence now, moving and living, the truths hidden in us are there to be disclosed, and to be divested of the coating which accident, incident, contingencies of all kinds wrap round about them.

But the nature of the coating which covers the hidden truth of things does not make that truth more or less valuable. It is as full of meaning in the moss on the wall and the sedge of the fen, as in the exquisite rose or spotless lily. Any leaf which quivers on a bush bespeaks an eternal ideal as true as that of your choicest bouquet. The gnarled knot of an oak is nowise unsightly in the light of that truth which it conceals, and to the thoughtful soul reveals. In view of the revelation yet to take place in ourselves, when this mortal coil shall put on immortality, we have been called "future creatures," who are becoming what we are to be, whose grace is to disclose glory, whose life is to merge into beatitude, health into immortality, and the little wisdom we have into a vision of the Divinity. This is the deep meaning that underlies the passing of our image here; for "surely man passeth as an image." [1]

* * *

BENJAMIN. Well! but, as to grace and beauty, there seems to be more in a beautiful thing like a lily or a rose, than in an ugly thing like a gnarled oak-trunk.

[1] Ps. 38. 7.

St. Victor. More beauty, but not more truth. There is no reason why an ugly thing may not have even more elements of truth in it than a beautiful one. For it is only a certain feature which stamps the true as beautiful. It is the complexity of truth in great simplicity; the refulgence of a complex truth which is in order. If you had no complexity, but only simplicity, you would have truth but no beauty. Isn't it perfectly true that 2 and 2 make 4? But there is no beauty in that. It is too bald a thing. On the other hand, if you had not simplicity but only complexity, if you had not the arrangement of order to make a unit but only a lot in confusion, you would have a bagful of things, which might be jewels, all very true; but with no more beauty in the whole than in the parts — the parts themselves failing to show as well as they might. Now string them on a golden thread into a fillet, or set them in a coronet. You have not a bagful of things any longer, but a beautiful thing.

The greater the simplicity when the perfections are many, the more intense is the beauty as of a crystalline transparency, which the eye or mind takes in at a glance. Thus, if the proposition 2 and 2 make 4 is true but not beautiful, an equation of Keppler, which is about as short as that proposition, is intensely beautiful; because in that simple expression stands revealed a great law governing the complex motions of our globe and of the other heavenly bodies.

It is in this way that the sayings of Our Lord are beauty. For we read in their transparent simplicity the depth of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God; we read the goodness and glory of our nature in time and eternity; and the intelligence is suffused with light and grace, which diffuse in the heart that

satisfaction called pleasure. Our Lord's words are objectively true, enduring for ever and ever, and justified in themselves. When we allow them to enlighten our eyes, and give wisdom to little ones,[1] they are also subjectively true, and are sweet to the moral taste of what is good and right. "How sweet are Thy words to my palate, more than honey to my mouth!" [2]

In like manner, peace is beautiful; as Isaias says: "My people shall sit in the beauty of peace;" [3] when, in spite of interests so varied, occupations so manifold, movements so interlaced, still people are not at variance; but, as he goes on to explain, they live "in the tabernacles of confidence, and in wealthy rest." Such too is the peace of the individual bosom; as some one sighed the other day on contemplating a devout person: "Oh, that I had your peace!" For it means that things internal are in order, and have settled into simplicity; that enlightened reason governs unenlightened sense and sentiment; and the rays of intelligence with the warmth of will—two faculties which are proper to man as a rational being—have served to put in their proper places those emotions and passions, which are common to him with the animal creation. It is then that intelligence and will govern us when, as St. Augustine observes, they are themselves illumined and warmed by a higher principle and a better one governing themselves, even by Him who is the Truth itself, the only begotten Son of God. The unction of peace flows down from God's Being to the last fibres in the composition of man.

Beyond the reach of any just conception which at present we can form, expands the beauty of that

[1] Ps. 18. 8–10. [2] *Ibid.* 118. 103. [3] Isai. 32. 18.

crystalline sea,[1] which is the divine Essence. That is the source of all truth for a thousand worlds to take off in imitation as best they may; and withal it is so simple as to be but one act of intellectual being. Communicated to us in the Person of Christ, it is "full of grace and truth;" [2] yea, as I just said, it is the Truth itself.[3]

Here you see the fact of beauty; and you see the function which brings it into being. It is the function of Order to make things beautiful, by putting unity into multiplicity. And the reflection of this beauty on our minds, that is to say, our knowledge of it, is itself beautiful and pleasurable, when it comprises the reasons of things, and has those reasons in the unity of order: *Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas!* This is philosophy, or the pursuit of wisdom. It is the one true philosophy, comprising things divine and human. And the mere statement of what it means throws into relief the different degrees of understanding which may be discerned among men.

There is the child's bare apprehension. There is the labour of reason mature, when it investigates or disputes, since God has left the world subject to our consideration, and we are trying to find it out.[4] There is the copious infusion of intelligence which comes with faith and grace; and this is the easiest and straightest way of all: "a holy way; the unclean shall not pass over it; and this shall be unto you a straight way, so that fools shall not err therein." [5] Finally, there is the state of mind in heaven and hell; and, in comparison with the soul's intelligence there, we are purblind and groping here.

* * *

[1] Apoc. 15. 2. [2] John 1. 14. [3] 1 John 5. 6.
[4] Eccles. 3. 11. [5] Isai. 35. 8.

BENJAMIN. Everybody cites truth; or pretends to seek it. Every lie is told in its name; as most tyrannies are committed somehow in the name of liberty.

ST. VICTOR. Quite so. Falsehood lives by truth; like a bad coin, which passes because it has a washing of silver and resembles other coins that are genuine. What was it that you told me about the bunch of holly you bought?

BENJAMIN. When I got home I found that the berries were fastened on with fine wires. The whole thing was a fraud. But it was sold as genuine.

ST. VICTOR. Like so many freaks which pass for Christianity, things made up of remnants, of leavings, of odds and ends, which were genuine in their origin, but as they stand are frauds, done up with fine wires. The true holly, you see, was made taxable to the false one. The berries were taken; the bits were true; and the thing was false. A good picture of falsehood and of vice; falsehood living on truth, vice passing muster for virtue!

BENJAMIN. However, says some one, truth is of so fair a mien, that to be loved it needeth but be seen.

ST. VICTOR. Be seen? A little more! Be looked at! Nor is that enough; a little more still! Be looked at with a virtuous leaning towards it, a liking for whatever it may happen to be! One will not love the truth when found, if he did not wish for it when feeling his way towards it. This means a wish to believe. Come, you and I, let us do the little more and look at truth, to see what is meant by the term.

Truth is the adjustment of your mind to its object. It is the perfect reflection of your mind apprehending,—not merely as a mirror throwing back the objects, but as a live faculty grasping the things presented. Now see how that plate-glass mirror

operates. Place yourself before it, before what Lucretius calls *speculi æquor*, that placid surface of reflection. You see how the image squares itself, matches itself, with your person. Everything is equable, nothing unequal; or, as the Latin word expresses it, nothing *iniquum*, from which we derive our appellative for moral "iniquity." Now take occasion sometime to look at yourself in a shop-window, where the coarse glass will favour you with a view of yourself indeed, but distorted to the damage of some cherished features. Though your features do not suffer any damage in fact, it is clear that they are misrepresented; there is a mal-adjustment, which is somewhat worse than if there were none. The image pretends to be, but is not true to you. It is in this way that the adjustment of the mind to its object is Truth. A mal-adjustment is falsehood, or a deprivation of what is just and right. No adjustment would be ignorance.

Benjamin. There is no difficulty in a mirror's giving back its object justly. But what about the mind's faculty for doing so?

St. Victor. There are difficulties in the mind. Many things go to spoil the adaptation of subject to object, and give you the shop-window's travesty, instead of an intellectual parity. The object may not be properly applied for your mind to see it. The medium may not be translucent enough—too many vapours in the atmosphere, too much moist light of sentiment or passion. Your will may not be resolute enough to insist on sufficient time for taking a good look. You may be restless as an insect; with the difference that the instinct of the insect is fixed, is polarized towards a certain colour, or a certain scent, and is arrested by nothing else; whereas your mind works quite otherwise. It can lend itself to

everything with perfect agility; it is made to take in everything, by self-adjustment to any object; it is as colourless as it is agile—"made to be everything," as the Aristotelian phrase expresses it. If it seems to be warped and crooked, that comes only from the interference of other agencies, which prepossess the intelligence in its action, or prejudice it. The will and the sentiments can come checking the mind and worrying it, as with a bridle and bit.

For instance, take prejudice from whatever cause it arises. Having fallen foul of something or some one, the will gets so worked on and bent, that it wishes anything to be believed about an object which its hatred has begun to fester on; and it works the intelligence accordingly. Then it will have belief, though without any evidence whatsoever. It will not even let the judgment of the mind be suspended in decent doubt. The avenues of understanding being thus closed up, what remains? Simply this: "I have brought my mind to be of my opinion!" The canker of prejudice, oftentimes originating in envy, makes everything which it infects look livid or green. "I saw all the labour and all the industry" of a man's doing, says Ecclesiastes; and this only brought him "envy from his fellow." [1] "Ye sons of men, how long will you be dull of heart? Why do you love vanity, and seek after falsehood?" [2]

* * *

Benjamin. That is making a world for oneself, not taking it as it is; making it up, not showing it forth.

St. Victor. Yes, setting up preconceived ideas, as Idealists do all round about them; plastering things with "categorical" forms and labels; hanging

[1] Eccles. 4. 4. [2] Ps. 4. 3.

wall-paper on the four sides of the den in which they live, and looking at their handiwork without any reference to facts and truth. Really most people select patterns which are to limit their view in the four quarters of their little world—a view as genuine and true as that of a sickly Chinese in his padded robe maundering by a dreamy brook in a seedy garden. They set up their paradise to look at and live in. They have a world made to order, which they pretend to take from facts and things. But, as you say, they only make it.

Benjamin. However, if we are living agents, we do make things. We act, and do, and cause them to be and to be true.

St. Victor. There you are touching on the Creative Truth of *factibilia*, or things which you make to be, as distinct from *scibilia*, things which are and make you know them. An artist creates his truth by projecting his idea and making a fact to tally. God projected His creative idea and made the world to be. Here Truth does not consist in the thing making the mind adjust itself to the reality, but in the reality being adjusted by the will to the mind's exemplar.

This is the productive art, which professes to create things truly or rightly in life or industry. If in life, it is the art of morality, which constitutes the truth or falsity of our existence; giving us, for instance, truthfulness or falsehood, according as our speech is conformable or not to the knowledge of the mind; setting up all other virtues or vices, according as our acts, ways and habits, are conformed or not to law; in short, producing what is either the truth of life in general, *Veritas Vitæ*, or the vanity of vanities, *Vanitas Vanitatum*.

The truth of life, or Moral Truth, directs us ulti-

mately to God as our last end. For this purpose, it shapes our immediate acts under the impulse of right purposes or intentions, using the proper means or process, and so arriving at the outcome desired.

Here, you see, the morality of life, which cultivates the soul itself, tilling it, receiving the dews of heaven, and drawing on the fatness of the earth, is responsible for what we call a man's character. It weaves the home-spun character of the soul, making us what we are. It is no lucky or unlucky star that makes us what we are. It is ourself wending our way, which is right or wrong, good or bad, noble or vile. And our own free will, our choice and counsel, is the cause of it all. As this activity of ours is going on all the time while we are alive and awake, so our individual character is being woven by ourselves at every moment of our conscious existence.

Such is the creative art of living; and its final product is one of two alternatives, depending upon free will. It is success or failure, truth or falsity, gain or loss.

But, if the production be that of industry, letters, or fine art, then it is only an occupation which God has given to the children of men. They go forth to their labour in the morning and work till evening, when they gather themselves up to rest in eternity.

Benjamin. After all, there is as much taking in this as creating or making.

St. Victor. The fact is that man does not create anything out of nothing. He only makes things out of material which he must beg for and take. Even his virtue operates and grows on objects presented, and on God known to be ever present. All the teeming world, material and spiritual, is the antecedent product of God's creative act, which has made things to be, to be true, to keep so, and be at man's service.

Here you come to a meaning of truth peculiar to God alone; who is said to be the Truth, as being the creative source of all things true. And what man is called upon to do is only to "walk in the truth" of God,[1] by conforming to the wisdom impressed on things and on himself; as Our Lord expressed it, "doing the truth," and "coming to the light," for one's works are done in God.[2] Here, you see, we have arrived at the Science of Truth as working in life. Such science is called Ethics, Moral Philosophy, and Moral Theology.

The Sherif of Mecca expressed a just and profound sentiment the other day, when he became King of the Hedjaz. He stated in a proclamation: "The world and its treasures, in comparison with Truth, are not worth the wing of an insect; since there is no purpose for man in this life except preparing for eternity."

* * *

Benjamin. It is singular how little you can afford to believe of what you hear, notwithstanding the professions of frankness, sincerity and truth, with which elegant people interlard their communications. Nay, I find the same person, within a limited number of hours, regaling me with contradictory statements, showing that, as was said of Napoleon, language is used like bullets, merely to shoot off, not minding whom it hits or what.

St. Victor. Not so strange or shocking, if circumstances give you occasion to consider, that other things, far bigger, are being hatched in the same coops day after day. What are gnats in a morass? They are part of the landscape. But here you are speaking of truth in its subordinate line of Truthfulness, or veracity.

[1] 2 John 1. 4. [2] John 3. 21.

Benjamin. That is an obvious virtue to think of, when truth is in question.

St. Victor. But it is making a narrow issue of it, if you bring truthfulness to the front of truth. We were speaking of truth as a moral virtue, affecting a man's character; and that is a much wider subject than truthfulness. Moral truth is a general conformity to the rule of rectitude in life; of which the particular virtue, called truthfulness, is just one line, and means sincerity in speech, not conveying impressions different from what you think. As a general virtue, moral truth is a part of the cardinal one called justice, and means that a person be as he is towards God and man, and do not make a show of being what he is not. Pride, for instance, shows one for what he is not; humility, for what he is. The former is falsity; the latter, truth.

This is the Truth of Life, *Veritas Vitæ*, by which one "does the truth," says Our Lord, and "comes to the light." It is co-extensive with life. The pursuit of it is a journey of many ways, of divers operations and affections, of varied works and actions, of respective ages and states, employments and professions. In all these paths there are laws of truth, to guide thee in all thy ways, even as the angels do lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.[1]

If then, with the growth of moral enlightenment, and by consistency in acting accordingly, your life comes to be an embodiment of law and direction, you become by instinct a law to yourself in your loyalty to obligations. Habits of virtue have grown into a second nature with you. It is not that the law is not there to reform you still if you need it, but that your moral existence is already in the proper form and make, which the law produces by

[1] Ps. 90. 11.

observance. This is a wide and deep meaning of the light phrase: *Noblesse oblige*—that you know something is expected of you, and you spring forward to fulfill it. It points to the permanent sense of obligation, or the moral bent; and the knowledge that such virtuous impulses animate a man gives everybody else to understand what he will do. It is the same principle which is used as a criterion to judge of God's providence, and the course of His government in the world: *Decet Ipsum*, It becomes Him. Being what He is, such and such a dispensation is what we expect of Him.

* * *

Benjamin. According to this, there is a power of creative truth in ourselves. We create, at least, our own character.

St. Victor. Yes, when conformably to rule and law we "do truth," to use Our Lord's phrase, or when we "walk in truth," to adopt St. John's. Then we make ourselves and our character, which is, after all, only our *studia et mores*, that is, the sum of our likings, our loves, our pursuits, and the habits contracted. The notion of truth enters here, and governs the process, because our self-development on these lines is an adjustment, a conformity of ourselves to God's eternal idea and law. What is not so adjusted is called vanity and lie: "Why do you love vanity, and seek after lying?" [1] so that "truths are decayed from among the children of men." [2]

The vanity and the lie come in, if we call evil good and good evil; put darkness for light, and light for darkness; take bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter; when we are wise in our own eyes, and prudent in our own conceits; tipsy, though not with wine.[3] It

[1] Ps. 4. 3. [2] *Ibid.* 11. 2. [3] Isai. 5. 20, 21; 29.9.

is all a vanity and sham, when the exterior is fair, but the interior foul; as Juvenal noted:

> *Nam scelus inter se tacitum qui cogitat ullum,*
> *Facti crimen habet,*

"He who entertains in silent thought any purpose to sin has already the guilt of the deed."

He is never a made man who is so fond of the expedient as to swerve from the right; who takes probabilities and chances, letting truth take care of itself; who fondles opinions and doubts, expecting of them the effects which only the certainty of truth can give. *Veritas effectum producit;* it is only the true thing that produces the true effect. "I'll take my chances," said one person on his death-bed, letting the treasure of his existence, thoughts, love, affections, fly at random in one final throw for eternity, to hit anything, or nothing, or something worse. It is a fatality which attends the fun of sporting with truth in life, that one goes on sporting at death.

There is a habit of inconsistency shown in thought, word and act, there is a disconnection tolerated as between principles and life, such that, if the like were exhibited in the common affairs of business, it would be taken as a mark of mental folly; any ideas that come being conceived and poured out in words and acts, as if the expression of folly were a vindication of it, and the reiteration of it a proof positive of its wisdom; as if life were a pastime, and the business of existence a game; and the loan of a soul [1] were a thing so cheaply had, and to be held at so cheap a rate, that both the soul and its fortunes might be as cheaply lost, and no one be the worse for it.

No one is the worse for it, except the fool who took

[1] Wisd. 15. 8, 12.

the chances. "We will hear thee again concerning this matter," said the Areopagites to St. Paul, giving the truth a wide berth, and getting rid of him and it, perhaps forever.[1] But, while the occasion passed away, the facts of the case were not altered one iota. "The truth of the Lord endureth forever." [2]

[1] Acts 17. 32. [2] Ps. 116. 2.

Chapter IX

TRUTH AND DOUBT

Benjamin. An acquaintance, who is a baptized Catholic but nothing more, said these words to me: "If there is a God, why does He not show Himself to us, so that we can see Him like that sun? Perhaps He is that sun?"

St. Victor. Was the creature serious or joking? cackling or crackling, like those people whom the prophet Nahum compares to a tangle of thorns just fit to go off crackling in flames—as dry as stubble, says he, very dry.[1] This is the same crass Manicheeism, of which St. Augustine recorded in his days, that it went about inquiring: "Is Christ perhaps that sun?" and he made merry over the notion of Christ, the Light of the world, being visible to sheep and goats, which had eyes to see the sun no less than the Manichees, but, if equally wanting in wits to know God, did not proclaim the fact so blatantly. It is a fetichism which cannot for the life of it rise above brute matter, and must bring down even what it adores to its own level, as some by-product of its materialism.

Here is a versifier who writes a book called *Religious Hours*, and indulges in his emotions by bestowing worshipful souls on all kinds of things around him, and then worshipping them in hymns. These he composes to Rain, to an Oak Tree, to a Smack, a Mill and even a Sponge. In a prayer to the wood of a Pine he closes thus:

[1] Nahum 1. 10.

> And when at last—for this too in the womb
> Of fate is sure—thou fall'st 'neath the axe,
> And streets shall pass over thy holy ground,
> Thy soul shall there eternal refuge find.

I do not know whether it was a pagan spirit of this kind which inspired the lengthy passage of a more distinguished poet, who went about "all the circle of the hills," moping and bemoaning the sun-flower, that it will still shine fair, but be "unloved"; the beech and the maple, that they will wear themselves away, "unloved"; the brook, that it will babble, "unloved." One may wonder whether perhaps such people are not laughing in their sleeves at the creatures who read them.

Benjamin. Well, what do you say to that question: Why doesn't God show Himself?

St. Victor. I answer that He does show Himself, in very Truth and in Fact. First, He makes all things true, and He makes Truth itself, by His essence and existence, as being Truth Creative, which makes everything conformable to its idea. God's essence is the ultimate basis on which the nature of all things reposes; for they are, each and all together, only a limited imitation of His being. As the thousand prismatic tints of solar light are drawn from the one ray which is differentiated into them, so the natures or essences of all things are derived in a graduated scale of likeness from the one model, which is God's own essence. And again, as all these created natures or essences are positive facts, which nothing but a positive will and power could have produced, we see that His being must be a fact positively in existence, or nothing else would be of the things which are.

Secondly, God is Truth absolute, because being perfect intelligence He produces the perfect thought

or infinite Word, which expresses His absolute being; and the perfect adjustment of His knowledge to His essence is Truth absolute. For the Word is God.[1]

Thirdly, God is Truth in the perfect exactitude of all that He communicates to the acceptance of faith: "Sanctify them in truth; Thy Word is truth." [2]

Fourthly, God is the Truth, in the sense of being the rule and exemplar of all exactitude, justice, equity, fidelity; so that all virtue is founded upon the idea of His perfection, and, when you have accomplished all that is required of you, still your virtue will fall infinitely short of that ideal which in Him is a reality. Be ye perfect, after the manner though it be not in the same degree, as your Heavenly Father is perfect.[3]

* * *

Benjamin. A friend disagreed with my views on these matters, and said politely: "Things are different because we are differently placed. We catch them at different angles."

St. Victor. Angularity! That is what is otherwise called the "relativity" of truth. Everything is said to be relative, shining this way or that, with this colour or that, according as different eyes or minds are looking. People pretend to claim that nothing is really fixed, nothing objectively something, that nothing is independent of the way some eye sees it. But, I ask, is not an unknown island in the ocean, or one hidden under Antarctic ice—is it not independently just what it is, though no eye has seen it? We do not make things, or their colours, or shapes, or angles, by looking at them. What is this "angularity" of things, that, because it is you

[1] John 1. 1. [2] *Ibid.* 17. 17. [3] Matt. 5. 48.

or I who look, the thing must take a new colour, or shape? and, as Hamlet put it, to you it must become a camel, to me a weasel, and to a third a whale? All this is a pretext for mental instability, out of which you get uncertainty, opinion, doubt, possibility. It is that snapping at probabilities which Dr. Fraser ascribes to the modern anthropologist in the lines:

> I rarely give a moment to
> Reflecting if a thing be true;
> If it feels probable to me,
> An argument were vain, said he.

It is the state of mind which develops into the professional ignorance of Agnosticism: We don't know, and don't want to!

Shiftlessness of mind can become so inveterate, by dint of never knowing anything positive about great truths, but always shuffling about them and professing a genteel indifference with regard to them, that some persons maintain uncertainty and unsteadiness to be a healthy state of mind, just as divers peoples have at times held that self-mutilation, or clubbed feet, or mincing speech and lisping were the right thing, and the stamp of refinement. So hundreds of people go about contradicting one another on the essential truths of time and eternity. A set of them aver that matters of religion and faith are a happy hunting-ground, and a field for what they call "adventure." Others again affirm that knowledge ascertained and positive is a mental "stagnation." There is quite a school which considers muddy waters to be just the proper thing for fishing in, or floundering about in to their heart's content. Here in an *Educational Review* we find Lessing quoted with approval, to the effect that, "if the Almighty were on the one hand to offer me

Truth, and on the other the Search after Truth, I would humbly but firmly choose the Search after Truth." We know that the hart panteth after the fountains of water. But we never knew that panting was an end in itself, and was what the hart panted for.

* * *

Benjamin. A gentleman observed the other day: "I don't know whether there is a heaven or a hell."

St. Victor. Perhaps he implied that he did not care; like that other gentleman who observed, it was all one which place he went to, for he would find acquaintances in both. Really, ignorance being the largest field in our intellectual world, I don't see why people should go about enlarging it, and taking heaven and hell in. However, the larger the field of ignorance, the wider the range of probabilities and doubts, which are on the borders of ignorance. And, if you once bring your mind to doubt about plain things, you will come to take all evidence just as you like it. Hugh of St. Victor observes, how it was by means of a doubt that the first lie entered into human history. For God said: In whatever day you shall eat, you shall die the death. The woman said: Lest perhaps we die. The devil said: You shall not die. God affirmed, the woman doubted, the devil denied and lied. Whoever takes the doubt instead of the truth secedes in the direction of the lie.

Just see how a romancer saves himself from all truth and certainty, by flying to the stars and comets for help and protection in the enjoyment of his obscurity and the franchise of his doubts: "Look, gentlemen!" says Thackeray; "does a week pass without the announcement of a new comet in the sky, a new star in the heavens, twinkling dimly out

of a yet farther distance, and only now becoming visible to human ken, though existent for ever and ever? So let us hope that divine truths may be shining, and the regions of light and love existent, which Geneva glasses [*Calvinism*] cannot yet perceive, and are beyond the focus of Roman telescopes [*Catholicism*]."

Now, ten centuries before this doubter fled for help and countenance to the comets, another Englishman, Venerable Bede, remarked about such kind of shuffling, that the Jews too had fled for refuge to the heavens, in order to escape from palpable evidence upon earth. They called for "a sign from heaven." Bede observes: "As if they could not give the lie to that also, and say, it happened by occult and divers phenomena of the air. You," he continues, "you who slander, *calumniaris*, the things you see with your eyes, feel with your hands, enjoy in your daily use, what are you going to do with things fetched from the sky? You will find a way to hedge even then, and you will whine that wonderful things have been done before by the Magi of Egypt." There Bede leaves them with their skylarking among stars and comets.

Our Lord too brought them down to plain common sense, saying: "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them." "No!" came the answer from hell; "but, if one went to them from the dead, they will do penance." Our Lord ended the dispute with a final reply: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe, if one rise again from the dead";[1]—or if a comet sails down to them from the sky. In fact, they did not believe, when Christ Himself rose from the dead; and they do not believe now, pending the apparition of stars not

[1] Luke 16. 29–31.

yet shining to illumine their faith, and the arrival of comets not yet flaring to anchor their hope. All the stars that they know by night, and the gorgeous sun which they see by day, are not enough; all the history of a "city seated on a mountain," where the world has seen evolving the wonderful things of nineteen centuries, are not enough; but the Unknown must be cultivated—what St. Paul called "*agnosia*," ignorance of God; [1] and what the votaries themselves of the Unknown, or the Positivists of to-day, call "Agnosticism." A great scientific association sat by and listened quietly, while a prophet, Professor Tyndall, stood propounding this dogma of ignorance in science: Since the materialist is confounded, said he, when we ask him whence comes this order in the universe, and since materialistic "science is dumb," we must bow our heads, refuse all knowledge, and say, we know not if there is a God!

* * *

Benjamin. If there is a lack of science or certainty about great truths in certain quarters, still there is no lack of opinions.

St. Victor. Which are not knowledge. The rank growth of opinions put forth is in an inverse ratio to the amount of truth possessed. Opinion implies doubt, which is not even a make-believe of knowledge; for knowledge means the certainty of truth. Now the deliberate culture of mere opinions and doubts will not tolerate the knowing of things for certain. Here is one writer dogmatizing about the sacredness of opinions in all matters of religion; and he dubs certainty therein as a "rank growth." With opinionatedness of this kind that will not tolerate "the rank growth of certainty," what becomes

[1] 1 Cor. 15. 34.

of mathematics, astronomy, chemistry; which are nothing if not exact, and fixed, and certain? What becomes of the Rule of Three, or of one's dinner, if certainty in the rule of arithmetic, or in the fact that one's food lies before him, is to be ruled out and weeded out as a "rank growth of certainty"?

Just sketch for yourself the region of the mind's activities. What is Opinion, Doubt and Ignorance? First of all, they are the negation of Intelligence, Science and Faith. Simple Intelligence assents without discursive reasoning to a truth or fact set clearly before it; as that 2 and 2 make 4, or that your dinner is really there before you. Science assents to conclusions established by discursive reasoning; and what is called Inductive reasoning goes before in matters of experimental fact, and prepares the premises by classifying the results of adequate observation. Faith assents to facts or truths, because it has sufficient testimony to accredit and certify them; and indeed we could never know nine-tenths of what is in our minds except by giving credence to others.

Quite contrariwise, Opinion merely thinks and thinks, is inclined to assent one way or other, but is still open to retreat; it leans one way, *cum formidine oppositi*, fearing that the opposite may be true. Doubt thinks and leans no way; it lives in a gaseous atmosphere like the air, where there is no use for plumb-line, compass, or any other directive agency in such a floating medium. Ignorance neither thinks nor assents; with respect to knowledge it is the inertness of a nonentity.

Now, as to the motives which fix the rank of these degrees in the hierarchy of knowledge: The certainty of assent to truths presented by Science, or accredited by Faith, is determined by evidence in

the motives; that the object is evident or proved, or that there is sufficient reason for believing. The mere probabilities between which Opinion oscillates are motives without sufficient evidence; and there is no certainty of science or faith in the outcome. Doubt is unattached and disinclined to all motives. Ignorance has nothing to do with them.

All this is in the world of truth as known—*scibilia*. To have truth or true things done or made, you need only add Prudence and Art. Prudence is the habit of judging rightly about things to be done, *agibilia*, or *agenda*. Art does the same with things to be made, *factibilia*, or *facienda*.

* * *

Benjamin. Newman says that a hundred difficulties about a truth do not create one doubt.

St. Victor. You had better distinguish two meanings of "difficulty," and, with Taparelli, consider that the word "difficulties" may signify either objections to a truth, or else mere questions about it.

Take an objection to be a counter statement contradicting a theory advanced. Then, if it comes from the side of a truth already ascertained, one such sustained objection, if insoluble, is enough not only to create a doubt, but to do away with the new notion entirely. On the other hand, take a question to signify only a matter which you do not understand in relation to some thesis. You know well enough that science is full of such questions—many not only unsolved, but you would pronounce them insoluble—and yet science marches on all the while in perfect security as to the truths already ascertained. Now not a hundred of these obscure questions, or "difficulties," create a doubt, or cast a

shadow upon truth. They only connote the limitation of our minds, and remain questions.

There are besides "difficulties" which are merely practical. Of course, these have nothing to do with truth or falsehood, with the certainty or uncertainty of the mind. They appeal only to the will and its spirit of resolution to overcome. Thus, when Christianity addressed itself to the mind of Rome, it encountered 30,000 practical difficulties in the shape of 30,000 deities enshrined there; on the other side of the Mediterranean, it had to face 40,000 such practical difficulties, from Isis and Osiris down to onions in the kitchen-garden; for, as a satirist put it, how happy were the Egyptians, whose gods grew in their gardens! But not all these practical difficulties together had anything to do with the truth of Christianity, and the peaceful certainty of the Christian mind.

* * *

Benjamin. Well, where is the place for applying the art of doubting sanely?

St. Victor. The *ars dubitandi?* At the beginning of a question, not at the end; so long as you have not yet worked the truth out, not when you have. We do not pull and tug to get nowhere. We do not hew and haul for the mere fun of the thing. We do not go tramping to the sole effect of trampling on the truth, as the hog did with the gardener's tulips, and then said:

> Explain, Sir, why your anger burns!
> See there untouched your tulips strewn,
> For I devoured the roots alone!

In the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas, there are over 3,000 articles or chapters. They all begin with a selection of the chief doubts on their respective

subjects. In other works, he begins articles with over a score of doubts, hemming the subject round with darkness to begin with. Then out of the darkness he makes the light to shine.

Begin by listening and inquiring: *Audi tacens simul et quaerens*,[1] says the Wise Man. For instance, you begin by doubting where Baghdad is. You take a map and find out. Now you know. Your doubt, or, if you prefer the word, your ignorance is dispelled by truth, as darkness by light. Doubt is really more than ignorance. It is ignorance groping—knowing enough to feel one's way, and, if honest, desiring finality. When finally the truth is reached, not a hundred more doubts, or as you quoted the word, "difficulties," will blot the fact out. A hundred doubts then are no longer the genuine article. They are a factitious smoke-screen, or what they call now a *camouflage*. Certainty once acquired cannot lapse into uncertainty; because it is the evident truth of the thing that made the certainty in the mind. And truth is not falsehood, that it can be corrected or changed.

What fixes our mind is the truth which we carve out of the world; not idle fancies that leave us free to go on jaunting. It could never be the objective of a rational mind, when consulting any map of earth, heaven or hell,

> As far as might be to carve out
> Free space for every human doubt,
> That the whole mind might orb about;

and still to enjoy the liberty of believing that Baghdad is in France or England, or that Timbuctoo is in Canada. There is no reason or sense in claiming liberty to believe a falsity. Yet you will find books

[1] Ecclus. 32. 12.

published at present by moderns who simply gloat over the demise of logic or reasoning, and claim the same right as the Idealists of imagining anything they please, without reference to fact or truth.

This reminds me of Father Cattaneo's story, in a lecture on "*Ozio*," that is, Ease or Indolence. He says, a youngster, one of two bright babies, refused to be caught, as his thoughtless fellow was, in the trap of learning A, B, C. For then, wot he, one should have to go on to M, N, Y, Z; and, after all that, to spelling, writing, poetry, rhetoric, and what not! Impossible! He would stay where he was in happy liberty, and "orb about" in blissful doubt, not knowing B. from the Bull's Foot which illustrated it. There was a "True Sceptic" for you, not to be kidnapped into intelligence, nor to be captured by truth! You remember St. Paul's phrase about truth capturing thought; "bringing into captivity," he says, "every understanding unto the obedience of Christ." [1] And he is quite plain about the kind of mind that refuses to be captured by the truth; it is that of the "height which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God." [2]

Benjamin. But what they object to is stereotyping thought. They say that for us thought has been stereotyped by the Council of Trent.

St. Victor. Yes, as that cabal of scheming sciences called geography, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, go tyrannizing over thought, and leave a mark for life on the mind, by stereotyping it with the locality where Baghdad is to be found; or with the sum of 2 and 2, that it is 4, and not 5; or with the run of planets and comets; or with the formulas of compounding and decomposing bodies. You must either take them, or, like the youngster, leave them,

[1] 2 Cor. 10. 5. [2] *Ibid.*

and not know B. from a Bull's Foot. Indeed, there is no need of a Council or of a science to stereotype thought. A mere chance or bit of luck can do it. So it was the merest chance that revealed the X rays, when Roentgen lighted on the discovery. There they are now. You can't help yourself. Your mind, like a kodak, has taken the thing, and been taken, arrested, "captured," as you see. What else is it for?

BENJAMIN. To be captured?

ST. VICTOR. To know!

* * *

BENJAMIN. That is a set of the mind!

ST. VICTOR. Yes, squared with the fact! But, if a man does not like to deal with facts, there are a number of alternative avocations. He may take a promenade with the Idealists, and construct a world for himself with the eye of what a writer just now advocates so sincerely as a "cosmic imagination." Or a person may prefer to sit on a cloud with the Sceptics, and revel in that mental mist which Professor Vance describes as unchanging hesitancy: "What do I know about it?"; or convinced despair: "I don't know anything, and can't." Or you might sidle off with the Modernists, one of whom in a book now issued takes the great fact of Christianity and its doctrine,—so positive, if ever teaching was!—and sublimates them into certain "absolute values," which he calls Truth, Goodness and Beauty; and in that nebulous Platonism of abstract ideas does not, indeed, let Christianity expire; he never lets it come into being. Or again, if facts do not please a man, and cannot induce him to square his mind with them, he may take refuge with the Positivists, or Agnostics, in the cult of the Unknown, and swear

by it as by any other idol; of which Jeremias said, that it is no better than a white thorn in a garden, on which every foolish bird goes to sit; or like a scarecrow in the patches of cucumbers, which does not even caw; or like a dead body, which does make itself so keenly sensible, that it is hurried away in the dark.[1] Recently, some one, who was not, I think, a Christian but rather an evolutionist, said of Herbert Spencer's defunct Agnosticism with all its parade of science, that addressing oneself to it any longer would be like "flogging a dead horse." But that does not prevent people from doing what St. Ambrose calls, "*phalerare*," rigging the carcass out—tricking out professional ignorance of God and travesties of higher things with the frippery of phrases borrowed from the region of intelligence.

How do you like this sample, which I shall now give you to illustrate the ignorance, uncertainty and doubt, which are raised to the dignity of a doctrine. A lady, professionally a novelist, publishes a *Defence of Idealism*. She makes religion up into the usual guy of "mysticism"; and she says, it is "part of our submerged and savage past." Its saints are the poets. With a wave of her hand she disposes of worship as "magic," and of religious doctrine as "mystery." Then she rises superbly to the blank glories and future certainties of the "occult," which she professes to know nothing of. She says: "Rid away all Magic that gives rise to Mystery, while adopting the judiciously waiting attitude as to the occult powers of the human individual." Thus you see, instead of the comets and stars, which Thackeray bade us wait for in the sky of truth, and welcome when they should come in futurity, this lady points to an "occult" skeleton

[1] Baruch 6. 69, 70.

in the dark closet of the individual, and bids us pin our faith to that.

She continues: "It is not, and it cannot be a question of certainty. No reasonable person demands certainty at this time of day. The utmost he is entitled to demand is a certain balance of probabilities. Perhaps not even that! Perhaps only here and there a chance; and there again an off-chance, or bare possibility."—You may recall what I observed to you before, that there are people who have gone through life without ever knowing either truth or certainty in the only affairs that matter. You need not be surprised if all the truth in creation fails to get a purchase on their minds. Mind, matter, time, eternity, immortality and God, what does it all come to? It comes to what some one wittily couched in a little dialogue: "What's matter? Never mind. What's mind? Doesn't matter." As you notice in the talk of certain social groups, everything that comes up must be turned off and improved into a pasquinade or a joke. So the Wise Man says; they count life to be tedious and they can afford to pass it off as a pastime, for their body is going to be ashes, and their spirit to be poured out as soft air.[1] In the person before us, you have one who evidently whiled away a good deal of time at the feet of some professor, and filled an empty head with the soft art of understanding nothing, which now she pours out in a book, equally empty of certainty and sense.

She goes on to say, it is only in moments of "exquisite and incredible assurance" that mystics conceive there is a God. Poets also, musicians and lovers too, have their moments of exquisite and incredible assurance. Christianity comes up for consideration only to be excluded from her purview of

[1] Wisd. 2. 1, 3; 15. 12.

truth and rectitude; and so she concludes in favour of Pantheism, that it "is absorbing Christian Humanism to Humanism's great gain"; that is, humanity will profit much by sloughing off Christianity and putting on Pantheism. There we are then, stowed away in the great Pan, which makes a god of us all; we are little grains in the big heap of the god. Pantheism here runs parallel somewhat with Positivism, which makes us out to be merely cells in an organism different from ourselves; only that, with the Positivist, the organism is a general thing called Society. In this Pantheism, it is into the god of a general mass or litter of things that we are pounded.

* * *

BENJAMIN. I hope you were not coming home to the facts of some one's case, when you spoke of propounding things to an empty mind?

ST. VICTOR. No, indeed! Eagerness is not emptiness. A mind is eager because it is interested in truth; and it is interested because it knows enough to have an inkling of more truth dawning. Eagerness in an interested mind is that rapacity for which Benjamin is commended: "Benjamin, a ravenous wolf, in the morning shall eat the prey, and in the evening shall divide the spoil";[1] and therefore as "the best beloved of the Lord shall dwell confidently in Him."[2]

BENJAMIN.

> What delights can equal those,
> That stir the spirit's inner deeps,
> When one that loves but knows not reaps
> A truth from one that loves and knows!

[1] Gen. 49. 27. [2] Deut. 33. 12.

ST. VICTOR. Yes! And I think it is the same poet who says:

> Thought leapt out to wed with thought,
> Ere thought could wed itself to speech.

Do you know where to find delightfully new ideas? Read old books, says Bulwer. But, if you want old and stale ideas, he says, read new books.

BENJAMIN. That does not suit me; for it would cut me out from reading your book, which is new.

ST. VICTOR. Anything but! It is as old as the hills. See my name. I date from seven or eight centuries ago, at the very least.

> For out of old feldys, as men seyth,
> Cometh al this newe corne fro yere to yere;
> And oute of olde bokes, in good feythe,
> Cometh al thys newe science that men lere.

BENJAMIN. Then, according to Bulwer, the odd things you have been retailing about Pantheism and Idealism are quite new?

ST. VICTOR. Well, not quite. I must admit that weeds are as old as grain. This Idealism, Pantheism, Scepticism, and, for the matter of that, Modernism too which is only a medley of many things that ought to be obsolete, are as old as the ancient Greek philosophers; who founded a lot of dissenting little sects, says Grote, each having a *clientèle*, and each knowing that it was only one sort of thing in the lot—a point on which many moderns pretend to plume themselves, that they are consciously part of a lot of things, all snarling at one another! Plato's grand conception of an immortal line, the living word of thought and truth passing on through the generations, and covering the world as the waters fill the sea—this conception, which in fact tallies

with the description of the Church, came to nought, with a barrenness which attends such systems and sects at all times.

One thing only are they capable of producing—the ignorance and error which they reproduce and propagate; as Shakespeare puts it: "What error leads, must err." And it is true, what St. Jerome wrote to the virgin, St. Eustochium: "There was never a bungling writer yet, *imperitus scriptor*, but found some reader like himself." These are people who live by munching their hearers! Do you know what that is?

BENJAMIN. No, what is it?

ST. VICTOR. Crassus, so rich and powerful, was said to have laughed once in his life. It was on hearing the pleasantry, that the right kind of lips had the right kind of fodder when an ass was munching thistles.

* * *

BENJAMIN. Is not that rather hard on minds inquiring?

ST. VICTOR. I don't say that good people inquiring sincerely are thistles. I only note the process they subject themselves to, if they place their intelligence at the disposal of persons who know nothing of consistency, who profess self-contradictoriness, who blow hot and cold, play fast and loose, say and unsay the same things; as one well-known writer propounded gravely: "With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do." And just now another comes to hand, who pleads and whines, that, if people will look at the contradictions of a "great genius," it is because they prefer to look at his warts instead of his face! Well, if the best of people will forfeit their good sense so far as to put themselves

at such a philosopher's feet, there you have what Crassus laughed at—the right fodder for the right lips!

Benjamin. But may not that be an incapacity to think out great things?

St. Victor. Then why practise the dishonesty of lecturing and writing on them, as if they were great thinkers? Naturally if they cannot think out things, neither can they speak out and state them. Meanwhile, they show what one critic calls a "repugnance to plain, clear statements in a single sentence"; and they "commit themselves to nothing definite; they go round about their subject; they aspire to be colloquial, and are not afraid of being diffuse; and perhaps in the end they inspire their perplexed reader with the desire that all philosophical discussion compulsorily took the form of the *Civil Code*, or Spinoza's *Ethics*."

If you want to see the effects, how in such circumstances of intellectual obscurity all colours become alike, and the true and the false indistinguishable in the dark, there was the sample I gave you already of that lady who expatiated on Certainty. In her *Defence of Idealism* she made an idol of uncertainty. Here is another person, a lady-physician, who discusses in a New York Review the "Applications of Psychology to Education," and is endorsed with high encomiums by the editors. She has steeped her mind in German Idealism. This is a system, as perhaps you know, which, denying facts and fixed truths, affirms that there are no first principles of intelligence at all; that the same thing can be and not be at the same time and under the same aspect; that we do not know what we know, that we do not see what we see, but, like magic lanterns, we are only projecting outside of us what we make our-

selves think we see. Now here is one passage from the kind of article which has won the high approval of the editors, and it is quite in keeping with all the rest of the production. The lady-physician says: "Each mind selects, creates the world in which it is to live. And, conversely, all the events which have transpired in the history of the world are but the outward realization of ideas which have been associated with brains like these. Despotisms, wars, revolutions, pyramids, crusades, inquisitions, cathedrals, dynasties, religions, sciences—all are only projected thoughts. Of what fearful importance is it then to know what thoughts shall spring up in the growing brain, and, if possible, how to modify their nature and sequence!"

So you see, Benjamin, you are making that cathedral which you imagine is there; you are making it by looking at it—with more felicity than the Germans at Rheims, who have only unmade one by shooting at it. You are making, don't you see, St. Peter's yonder! So am I. There is one odd circumstance though about our two concoctions, yours and mine, that somehow they agree in presenting an identical thing, great, grand and beautiful, down to its thousands of particulars; and that no one, outside of an asylum, ever made of that basilica anything but the plain fact that is there, independently of all of us, and of all our ideas.

There is a sample for you of "munching one's hearers"; and of the pedagogy which, through such hearers, is to munch generations of children.

Benjamin. A literary audience should be able to check such aberrations of reason as you have described, and to reinforce philosophy with sense, and bring it to order.

St. Victor. If the aberrations of reason are not

made to order for the literary audience! For there is sometimes such a thing as a "provoking generation," which Isaias describes: "Who say to the seers, See not! and to them that behold, Behold not for us those things that are right; speak unto us pleasant things; see errors for us!" [1]

It is the part of those who enjoy the heritage of truth, not to keep aloof from what is being brought home to the bosoms and business of our generation. When people's principles are at loose ends, and therefore are no fixed principles at all, it behoves us to help the drifters and get their dangling lines taut in their minds.

[1] Isai. 30. 9, 10.

Chapter X

TRUTH AT AN ANGLE

Benjamin. But what of the angularity which that person invoked?

St. Victor. Yes! we are forgetting it. That is the relativity of truth; which means, that what you see to be true is so only to your optics; and I am graced with a vision of truth just as good, when I see just the contrary. Now, there are no such angles to truth. There is no truth relative to you, which becomes false relative to me. In the matter of goodness, indeed, there is plenty of relativity. Some things are good for you which are not good for me; because goodness is subject to use. If a thing does not serve, if it is useless, if it is bad for you, it still continues to be good in itself and for others. But truth is not subject to use; you can't eat it, or drink it, or put it on, or build a house out of it. It is there to be seen. It imposes itself upon you. And, if it is necessary for you to know it, you must accept it at your peril. Otherwise, you have wilful ignorance, or crass error; and, in both cases, full culpability.

The word, "relativity," applied to truth, stands not for angles, sides, facets of the thing. It is only a clumsy word for substantial contradiction, and for glossing contradiction over as something venturesome, bright, sprightly and sane. Your acquaintance says, there is no God; no inspired Word of God; no Church founded by God; no human soul; no immortality. Where is the angularity between this

blankness of mind and the light of the contrary truths? Yes or No! *Sic vel Non!* God is, or He is not. One or other of these propositions is true; and the other is false. There is a Church founded by God, or there is not. As Dr. Johnson said of a scientific controversy in his time: There are reasons for a *plenum;* and there are reasons for a *vacuum;* but one or other must be true. Where you do not know, there you may have plenty of reasons for oscillating between Yes and No. But, in the mean time till you do find out, all your reasons for doubting do not change the fact; which is one way, and not the other. Of the reasons advanced on both sides one set must be bad, though you don't know as yet which. A multitude of bad reasons cannot make a good one; as the same Doctor said: No number of rabbits will make a horse.

Horace says: *Virtus falsis dedocet uti vocibus*, honesty will not let one use the wrong names for things. You have no right to call ignorance, "angularity," or doubts, "relativity." It is more honest to say: I don't know! or at most: I opine! or, I'd like to convince myself! Then your ignorance or your opinions would not be posing as science or faith.

Benjamin. One person I am thinking of expresses the matter thus, that truth is like the sunshine and the rain, which no man has a right to appropriate, thinking they were meant for his own patch of seed-ground alone. And so, since the crops are different patches, the truth which comes shining down must be different—or indifferent—or something of that kind.

St. Victor. Exactly! "Different or indifferent!" That is what all the differences are driving at, to get at Indifferentism; to get rid of the truth, and

to get rid of any one or any Church that has the truth. It was said a long time ago: "He boasteth that he hath the knowledge of God, and calleth himself the son of God. . . . He is grievous unto us, even to behold. . . . Let us condemn him!" [1]

But as to the sunshine and rain, if you grow vines and I grow turnips, are the rain and the sunshine different for you and for me? If they make the live rose bloom and the fly-blown carrion rot, don't you see where the difference lies? If one is a saint and the other a sinner, is it because there are two different laws, and not rather because there are two kinds of reception given to the same law? And the different degrees of ignorance regarding truth, whether it be total or partial; the divers stages of blank doubt or opinion, which are only ignorance groping; the steps of incredulity, whether negative or positive, blank or arrogant, mild or malignant—all these only show the setting of a man's mind towards truth, and of his free will, which is managing and manœuvring his mind for him.

Thus it comes to pass that what is one man's food is another man's poison, all because of their peptic juices which are different, the article remaining the same. It is a great principle of the schools: *Quodcumque recipitur per modum recipientis recipitur*, Whatever is taken takes the shape of the recipient. Water poured into a round vase, a square one, an oblong one, takes the relative shapes. But the relativity is not in the water; nor is the angularity. It is in the vase. And to say that the water is round or square or oblong is a slander. *Non-causa pro causa;* it is saddling the wrong

[1] Wisd. 2. 13, 15, 20.

thing with the responsibility. So do not slander Truth with relativity or angularity.

* * *

Benjamin. However, truth is notoriously many-sided.

St. Victor. And no side of a truth contradicts any other side; as no truth ever contradicts another. If one side of a shield is silver, there is no reason why the other may not be of gold. To have seen this is the privilege of the spirit of truth itself, which always saw

> In one volume clasped of love, whate'er
> The universe unfolds; all properties
> Of substance and of accident beheld
> Compounded—yet one individual light the whole!

A profound truth has many sides and facets of its own; and partial views of it supplement one another. If it is very complex in its beauty, very deep and recondite, one view of our limited intelligence will not exhaust it; for the factor of our intensive insight, which stops somewhere, circumscribes the view. See the surges leaping amid the rocks. In a general way you see the fact and discern the reason. But no physicist can balance the forces which are operating; and no mathematician can approach the equation of curvature for each and every minute drop, acting and reacting as it splashes in that vast surge. One Mind knows. You know only as far as you see; and so far truly. What is beyond is not untrue, or relative, or angular, merely because you happen not to see it.

The ripples in yonder basin, as the jet of the fountain comes down in spray, and each drop sets up a special wavelet, which starts off in concentric

circles, penetrates and cuts through the ripples caused by every other drop, making one great confusion of agitated water—every one of these ripples is measured and accounted for in an equation of mathematical precision, which one Mind knows. But what does any one of us know about it? Nothing! And that without any prejudice to the truth as far as we see it, or to the amplitude of the truth beyond, which we cannot ascertain.

The rays of that sunlight by which you are working come refracted through clouds, through the air, round the sashes of windows and doors, and along corridors; and the refraction is observing the strictest mathematical laws at every turn. But what do you know about it? "By what way is the light spread, and heat divided upon the earth?" [1] Yet you use the fact of the daylight, however little you know about its ways, while you go on working and walking by it. St. Augustine observes of your walking, that you do not know how such a complex function is executed; you simply do it; *solvitur ambulando.*

However, if you are none the wiser for so many wise things you blindly do, that is no reason why you should not plunge into the depth of the wisdom and knowledge of God. On those words which Our Lord addressed to Peter: "Launch out into the deep," [2] St. Ambrose says: Launch out "into the deep of disputations! What is so deep," he asks, "as to see the depth of divine resources, to know the Son of God, and to confess the eternal generation? Though the human mind cannot fully investigate it, the fulness of faith enfolds it. Because, if it is not given me to understand how He was born, I may not shut my eyes to the fact that

[1] Job 38. 24. [2] Luke 5. 4.

He was born. . . . If we believe not God, whom shall we believe?"

* * *

BENJAMIN. Well, "seeing truth at different angles" comes down to this—professing to deal in contradictions and fallacies.

ST. VICTOR. Yes, with the experts.

BENJAMIN. And with the rest?

ST. VICTOR. It comes down to shiftlessness of mind, and shuffling through life. In matters of religion, people shuffle into superstition and sects; as St. Leo remarked of pagan Rome and its 30,000 gods, "It made a great show of religion because it let in every falsehood of superstition, *Magnam assumpsit religionem, quia nullam respuebat falsitatem.*" In matters of science it shuffles into professional ignorance.

The popular philosophy which a light school of scientists made up out of this professional ignorance, and made use of to scoff at religion, miracles and Christianity, was described by Lord Grimthorpe as consisting of "a few scornful epithets which conceited young men with a little practice apply to anything; and of some plausible analogies and dogmatic maxims, which clever philosophers can easily invent and pass off for the latest revelations of science." Lord Kelvin, a luminary of science, observed: "Living miracles ourselves, we may not sneer at the supernatural." He said that M. Pasteur had remarked to him: "Nothing is natural—everything is miraculous! *Tout est miracle!* You perform a miracle when you move your teeth or your hands—which movement no man living can explain." Here these gentlemen were using the word, "miracle," not in its technical, but in a hyperbolical sense—which expressed their mind well enough.

Scornful epithets! said Grimthorpe. This was the butt of the Psalmist's contempt, when he spoke of them that "sat in the seat of the scorners"; or, as the Septuagint has it, that "sat in the chair of pestilence." [1] Among the Hebrews under the Ptolemies, this infection of criticism or habit of sneering was the specialty of such as got "Alexandrinized," that is, of those who were described as "yoked to the Gentiles, and sold to do evil." [2]

* * *

Benjamin. With 30,000 false gods adored in Rome, and the only true One ignored, the situation was difficult for Christians.

St. Victor. You are implying perhaps that, with 30,000 errors pecking at the one Truth today, our situation is difficult?

Benjamin. One should have to face all round to meet them all.

St. Victor. As the light does. The light of the world must shine. The city seated on a mountain need not exert itself to be seen; it cannot be hid. The sun lights up and dries up. It fosters and disinfects. Its actinic rays are a terror, not only to darkness, but to dimly lighted places, damp and malarial.

Benjamin. But when the shutters of prejudice are closed very tight all round—?

St. Victor. The blankest error cannot be always shut up, so as never to get a peep at the sun. To this Lincoln alluded, when he said, you can't fool all the people all the time. Errors have only a lease of life; and not even life; they have only an artificial vitality. For duration, many of them rank with the midges of a day. But mischievous midges,

[1] Ps. 1. 1. [2] Mach. 1. 16.

and poisonous! It is in their name that lives are lost in time, and souls for eternity. To put a good face on the errors, the formula with the ancient Romans ran thus, that the sentence of death was passed on a Christian because he contemned the gods. The errors of each age are its gods. You contemn them at your peril. Thirty-thousand at a time, if not an unusual number, was a fairly respectable one.

Benjamin. It makes the sea of life a sea of seething error; and, if you are to keep afloat at all among the disputations of men, you must be a navigator.

St. Victor. Not all the people aboard need be the navigating officer. One is enough to direct. And just one is indispensable, as we see in the Head of the Church. While all aboard understand the main direction of their course, few may be competent to steer clear of rocks and shoals. And the most competent are like what I have found the most learned to be; that is, most cautious. On rounding so well-known a headland as that of Anglesey, a captain observed to me, that he always allowed himself five miles of room between his ship and any cliff or reef.

* * *

Benjamin. I took my Italian acquaintance to a conference, learned and original, at the French Church. I asked afterwards, what was the impression received? All I got for answer was: "Oh, the Bible says so!" What can you do when you run up against a dead wall like that?

St. Victor. Certainly, that was not a very profound contribution to the literature of the subject. But people can't go deeper than their pockets; and you must not be too exacting with the penurious.

Benjamin. Another phrase is: "We have outgrown Christianity."

St. Victor. You showed me that in a *Weekly*. Do you remember it was in a precious piece written by a lady, who said: "We who have outgrown Christianity owe much to George Eliot"; and you expressed disgust at the tenor of the article, wondering how any decent magazine could print it. But you may not know how *The Times* of Chicago justified itself, when remonstrated with for publishing garbage. It said: "Look at our name; we are *The Times!*" So, if we have had justification served up to us in many ways, we have it now by the times.

We have had justification of error by ignorance—that crassest of fallacies, which says: "I don't know; therefore the thing is not so!" You do not know the number of the hairs of your head. Is there then no number? are there no hairs? The Wise Man asks: "Who hath numbered the sand of the sea, and the drops of rain, and the days of the world?" Because you don't know how many they are, have they not been there, no sands, nor drops, nor days? All the sciences are full of things that we know are so; but how, we do not know. And the highest science of theology about God is much more replete with things which are beyond our ken; since our

> Knowledge is the swallow on the lake
> That sees and stirs the surface-shadow there,
> But never yet hath dipt into the abyss.

A few years ago, a Parisian oculist, wise in his own conceit, declared with respect to that wonderful organ, the human eye, that if any artificer presented to him a piece of mechanism no better made than the eye, he would reject it as bad work. In

this way, arrogance and ignorance have always gone floundering about in God's infinite truth; and, because people would not believe uncomprehended mysteries, they have ended in incomprehensible errors.

There is the justification of error by means of obscurity and cloudiness—by means of a general talking about a subject, with a keen dislike for reasoning or logic. Anything like clear ideas limits a man to consistency between one idea and another; as law limits licence. And hence the dislike which is entertained for people who do know clearly their own minds, what they are talking about, or what they believe, and who then in statement or dogma formulate decisively what they know so clearly. You see, anything like logical precision puts limits to error and opinions; just as, in matters of morality, virtue limits the range of action, by shutting out vice.

You see too why phrases are readily adopted and bandied about—phrases which have some general idea hanging loosely about them, while the idea agrees more or less with something which people want. Such phrases or terms in the vocabulary of credulity become then as peremptory as a slave-driver's whip for the credulous mind; and you are not expected to call for an explanation or a proof. I gave you an example in the word, "Anthropomorphic." "Evolution" is another such word; so too "higher criticism," "modern thought," "science," "culture," and the like, which are meant to serve as labels for smuggling in anything.

There is justification of error by mistake, when people who pose as critics, cynics, humourists, reviewers, are so clever in omitting to define what they are talking about that you are thinking of one

thing and they are thinking of another, and there is no saying what is right and what is wrong. Anything can slip through as if it were true. Famous examples here are such words as "Religion," "Creed"; even "Christianity," and, of course, "Church." The deliberate uses to which these words are now put remind us of what Viscount Grey said recently about Parliamentary resolutions, that "they are often drawn up to enable people who don't mean the same thing to vote for the same words."

Then there is justification by the rule of thumb, or judging of everything by results; that, however you go tumbling about in the world of thought, if only you light on your feet somehow, then you were all right from the first. That is how certain empires have justified their history. It is a form of what is called "whitewash." It is the "pragmatical" way of looking at things, which does not look beyond its nose for principles. It despises them. So, if little Jack Horner sits in a corner, eating a Christmas pie, why, of course, he has a right to say, What a good boy am I!—albeit he has robbed a church for his pie. For they say that the original Jack Horner was the steward of a monastery; and that the pie was his share of the monastic lands which he took in order to make a manor of his own. To the Pragmatism which takes results as the criterion of right and truth, Jack Horner and his Christmas plum must be the very ideal of rectitude and wisdom.

* * *

Benjamin. Now may I not say to you, with all respect, what Phaedrus said to Socrates: "O Socrates, you are a great hand at telling stories from Egypt or any other country, and making oaks talk!"

St. Victor. And may I not retort with the reply of Socrates to Phaedrus: "The men of that day, not being wise as you young men are, were content in their simplicity to hearken to an oak or a rock, if only it told the truth." I am content, Benjamin, as those old folks were. I like a good thing when I find it, no matter where. Here is another for you. A gentleman of the medical profession having written a book on *The Borderlands of Science* to show how much of mere surmising and guessing there is about every science, and how little of real fact in it, another gentleman, discussing the former, delivers himself as follows: "He seems to be whipping a dead horse. Every one knows that hundreds of scientific dogmas and theories have been jettisoned in the past; and no one doubts, least of all the true man of science, that hundreds more will share the same fate in the future." Here you have the necrology wholesale of things called "sciences"; and their demise taken quite as a matter of course. You hear put to the account of science what that lady, whom I quoted for you, affirmed about everything: "No reasonable person," she said, "demands certainty at this time of day." In fact, while the truth of the Lord remaineth for ever, you could, if you were as old as I am, have assisted at one hundred and one "scientific" funerals.

* * *

Benjamin. Their numbers give them weight—I don't mean the number of funerals, but of the people who go that way.

St. Victor. "*Siamo tanti e tanti!*" See what a big herd we are! as the pack of wolves sing in their hearts, when they course, yelping, after a lonely Russian sledge. But observe! Numbers give

weight when they pull the same way; not when they pull every way, contrary one to the other. Nineteen centuries of generations have stood sponsors for the identical Apostles' Creed, understood in the one obvious way as its plain words run. No two handfuls of scorners can agree for certain on anything, except on one article of a creed, and that is sneering at Christianity, and pronouncing in favour of disunion, or dissolution.

H. W. Beecher denounced all schemes of union among dissident Churches, whether planned by Pope, Protestant or Pagan; and he affirmed that the strength of the Christian religion lay in the number of the existing denominations. This is just what whole cohorts of apologists are saying today. However, their sub-consciousness may possibly have been seized by a truth which is indisputable, that only a religion which is divine could possibly have survived such a multitude of contradictions swarming all about it; and this may be the way they approach that profound thought.

Benjamin. If numbers fail those who limit their view of truth to some single angle and so read it distorted, at least talent is not wanting to a fair proportion of these people; nor genius to a few.

St. Victor. Why not? God lent those talents to them; as he lends ours to us, with the injunction: "Trade till I come."[1] He lent all the good capital of those gifts to them; but He did not design the bad investment. Like any machine that is made by a competent artist, a man's parts may be vast; but his free use of them may be vile; as a passage of Livy's insinuates: "*Vir ingenii magni magis quam boni*, A man of great genius rather than a good one." Pope expresses the same idea thus:

[1] Luke 19. 13.

'Tis phrase absurd to call a villain great;
Who wickedly is wise, or madly brave,
Is but the more a fool, the more a knave.

And again:

All that rais'd the hero sunk the man.

Man is of God's make. But the making of his own character is his own doing. That is what he is here for. If he abuses his opportunities, God will not work miracles to save the machine from its doom; any more than he will save a ship from being ripped up by an iceberg, merely because she happens to be a big one like the "Titanic."

BENJAMIN. We can't help admiring the creations of genius.

ST. VICTOR. No harm in that, if only you do not take to admiring the abuse, as you are very apt to do. The gifts are the products of God's creation. His gold is still gold, though shipped in a scow. Of course, if like Naaman's gold it has Naaman's leprosy sticking to it, you had better keep your hands off; as the Church so steadily insists in the matter of contagious literature, however brilliant it may be. The slanders issuing from eloquent lips, the

Slight and sprightly talk
And vivid smiles, and faintly venom'd points
Of slander, glancing here and grazing there,

all of which go to swell the power of the Lie in the world, are all like the Lie, sticky, tarring its object, reducing the most unexceptionable truths, persons, institutions, to the likeness of the deceiver's mind.

BENJAMIN. Somebody quoted the other day Schopenhauer's idea of us to the effect, that Catholics are not amenable to reason, and cannot be

true philosophers; because, said he, they are the slaves of other people's teaching.

St. Victor. He must have been thinking of his own disciples, and have wished to disseminate their likeness among us. I am not certain which one of the notorieties who preceded Schopenhauer in German philosophy—I think it was Fichte—came to his lecture room one day, and propounded: "Now, gentlemen, let us make God!" When he was told at a later date, that one of his disciples understood his system, he replied, How glad he was to hear it; it was more than he could say for himself!

* * *

Benjamin. There seems to be some charm about keeping opinions mobile and fluid in the mind; as I see is the case with a modernist lecturer here, who shows a decided hankering for things questionable and slippery; and he leaves them so.

St. Victor. And shady, and damp, and sloppy.

> Nigh founder'd, on he fares,
> Treading the crude consistence, half on foot,
> Half flying.

Benjamin. Then there is the complex. That learned Academician who has written on the Early Church, and whose eulogist complimented him to his face on having "blown out the tapers of the little chapels," is very fond, I see, of qualifying theological questions with the term "complex"—which used to cause me trouble and confusion. He dropped the questions just there in a bundle labelled "complex"; sneered at the learned Fathers of the Church; and passed on without having unravelled a single thread.

St. Victor. That made him look wise, without endangering his safety. For you must know that a

large part of the distaste professed by many for any positive statement of truth is simply a wholesome fear of being caught themselves, if they venture to make an affirmation. They would, but dare not. Hence the diffuseness of roaming round about at large; or else shooting off at a tangent with the paradox of a contradiction, or the antithesis which you are left to investigate, or the commonplace to float on till something more sensible turns up. You see there are junctures every day, literary, scientific and theological, in which it is not rigorously true that a man will write the better on a subject for knowing something about it. There was that journalist who had visited a country, and who now knew something about it; being asked on his return to write, he excused himself just then, because, said he, his mind was still too full of inconvenient facts. He would write better when he got freer from the truth. And so with many of your divines. That modernist Academician would never have won his arm-chair, and earned the accompanying eulogy for "blowing out the Church's lights," if he had known something of theology and used his knowledge when tackling questions of the Early Church. To-day it is not always necessary to study a substantial course, in order to become a Doctor in it. You have to write a thesis. So you spend your time, not in learning the science, but in tricking out your paper.

One German luminary, years ago, wrote a short paper to prove that really we have an arboreal pedigree in the apes. The *Scientific American*, if I remember rightly, stated that the learned man had spent twenty years of his life elaborating this thesis. Whether on the merits of this assertion, or the merits of the paper, a learned institution con-

sidered the German's squib worthy of a place in its *Annual Report.* But soon afterwards President D. S. Jordan delivered an address on the "Making of a Darwin"; and he had not a little to say about so-called research which leads nowhere; which does not cultivate the investigators; and yet, said he, gives the Doctor's cap. Indeed, such specialties are only the tracks of a narrow gauge for the trucks of little minds.

However, not to discourage any aspirant, I will add that, if he is a very little truck on a very narrow track, he will find his book treated quite respectfully, with extensive notices in the Press for others of his kind to read; and the day may come when he will find himself hoisted to a place among "*Penseurs du Jour*," "Thinkers of the Day." It is thus that in Histories of Pedagogy, every little contriver of any pedagogic experiment is given a place as large as the University of Paris or the monastic schools of the Middle Ages; nay, larger than the Christian Brothers, or the Jesuits. And so too any little heresiarch, who has set up a side-show of what he called religion, bulks about as conspicuously in the Cyclopedias as the Church of Christ, Son of the Living God.

Chapter XI

FACTS

Benjamin. If the unhappy phrase, "seeing truth at different angles," or, as you have formulated it, the "relativity" of truth, must go to the limbo whither you have sent it, we have only to leave our high and airy atmosphere and come down to hard, dry facts.

St. Victor. High and airy atmosphere! You mean the low, moist and gross inconsistencies of fluid opinions, as opposed to firm and positive truth. It is mobile and loose opinions that stand in an inverse ratio to hard and positive facts. The more opinions the fewer the facts; the more the facts, the fewer the opinions, till the truth, clear and dogmatic, rings out instead.

What did you say about leaving the realm of opinion, and coming down to hard, dry facts? We don't come down to facts from the fluid material of opinion, and what Milton calls the "crude consistence" of chaos. We climb back to the solid ground of facts, and look about serenely for the reasons of them; also for the reasons of other things, which are seen to be higher, wider and better still. This is philosophy, which by advancing from solid premises of fact comes to trace the fibres of the whole system or science of truth. Reacting on ourselves, from the speculative to the moral, from the theoretic to the practical, the same process of reasoning induces us to try and live as we ought—that is, to be, to do, to do without, to depart, and so get there at last.

BENJAMIN. Get where?

ST. VICTOR. At the final fact for which we are; the final cause, which set the first one agoing. No one ever does anything except for something. The end starts the beginning. *Finis est causa causarum;* and therefore a wise man begins at the end; a fool ends at the beginning.

BENJAMIN. The end might be called an ideal.

ST. VICTOR. It is in the idea, but meant to be realized. It is not an ideal, as if unreal. Was New York only an ideal, when the "Titanic" set out to reach there? It was a very real place, prospectively in her idea; and the ship's fifty thousand tons were quite real, to match the place she was steaming to. When she settled at the bottom of the Atlantic instead, did she miss a mere ideal? like the unreality of some poetic justice, which a novel-reader might look for and not find at the end of an unreal story. Nothing so real as the end in view, which sets all the other realities in motion. It is the final cause, which is the first to operate from the laying of the keel, but is the last to be reached in the sailing of the ship. And all arts, which only execute the purpose of the end in view, are subject and inferior to that which has the end in view for its direct object, and controls all the others accordingly. Hence the arts of life are subservient to the science and art which has for its object man's final end, and eternal destiny; since all arts and sciences are meant to concur and subserve man's final well-being, which is the direct object of religion and of divine science.

In this sense, an idea is said to be stronger than armies; for these are governed by that; and, when armies are exhausted and defeated, the idea remains dominant just as before to reconstruct them. Nothing so real as the intention and direction. Of un-

realities we have more than enough. We see them described long ago by Isaias: "As he that is hungry dreameth and eateth, but when he is awake his soul is empty; and as he that is thirsty dreameth and drinketh, and after he is awake is yet faint with thirst, and his soul is empty."[1] This is the unreality of the imaginary life which flits amid fancy and fiction; of the soul which flutters about among opinions, as moths around factitious lights of the night; of the unreasoning intelligence which dreams through existence, with the Idealist and Pantheist

> In the void world,
> The wide, grey, lampless, deep, unpeopled world.

All this would really do no harm, if everything were unreal about it; that is, the person himself that dreams, as well as his imaginary world. But he is a great reality; and he has yet to awake, finding himself hungry and thirsty.

So, if you do not want to shepherd the winds, and run after birds on the wing, take facts as the only concrete things which stand on their feet like ourselves. You can turn them round. You may walk about them. You may scold them, and revile and slander them, and abuse all who accept them as true. But they don't budge for all that. *Facta non probantur;* they are not proved. They are seen and touched. You may take them or leave them; but you will not change them. Nor do they care a fig who you are, or in what age you happen to live. If you were not present to see and touch them, others were who tell you; and you too know now by belief, or faith. It is not necessary to see everything with your own eyes in order to know. You do not go flit-

[1] Isai. 29. 8.

ting about with divers opinions and liberty of judgment, as to whether Calcutta or Pekin is in existence or not.

You and I are facts. On our coming into this world we were facts, separate from all else, possessed by ourselves, subject to duties and rights, and having an object to live for. Therefore are we called "persons." We shall go out of this world just as we came in, subsistent facts or persons, liable to all the consequences of our capacities used or abused and of the responsibilities incurred.

* * *

Benjamin. Some one asks, whether different ages may not have different ways of seeing truth and fact, due to the "mentality" of people being different at different times?

St. Victor. "Mentality" should mean simply the mind's capacity for seeing truth, like a mirror's capacity for reflecting. If it means anything else, for instance, the ways which certain minds have of looking at things, the factitious habits they assume of taking a pose and getting "angular" or "relative" with regard to truth; then, don't you see, "mentality" brings us back to the angularity or relativity which people would like to find in truth, but which they only put in their mind's eye. "Mentality," as the word is now employed in common use, means a capricious make-up of the mind; a way of making it work; a set given to it; a trick of the trade, which opens the mind, or closes it, or keeps it cautiously ajar, to ensure an arbitrary control over what kind of truth shall enter, and what not, and how it shall look when it is in.

Taken in its strict and proper sense of being the mind's capacity or qualifications for apprehending

truths and facts, our mentality is, no doubt, limited, because the mind of every one has certain boundaries to its insight, and is subject to the limitations of those antecedent acquirements with which new ideas should come into association. Hence, given this limited insight into new things, or limited experience of old things, there are some perceptions which the mind appreciates, grasps, grips, tastes, relishes; others, not so. One sort fits in and comes natural; the other does not; though they both agree, as the less with the more.

Four agrees with six, as contained in it, though not equal to it. They are not false or contradictory, one to another, because they happen not to be in the same numerical degree. And, if you and I meet a person in whom you see only some man, but I, my friend Pierre, there is no contradiction between the contents of your obscure apprehension and those of my distinct comprehension. In substance, the fact before us is identical for both of us.

Yet these varying degrees of distinctness have given occasion for persons to talk of a "real assent," and of an unreal one; of some truths being accepted merely "because the Church says so"; others, not only because the Church says so, but because we get a mental hold or live appreciation of them; as the good woman said, to whom a great truth was brought home, that she had now something to "chew on."

This difference of apprehension, which is purely an accidental circumstance of degree and not of kind, of personal relish and not of objective truth, is now being abused by Modernists, as a reason for demanding a new terminology to express old truths; their obvious intent being to discard old truths altogether under the pretext of dressing them up

anew to suit the twentieth century's "modern thought."

Benjamin. With or without a live realization in the apprehension, the circumstance that "the Church says so" is always a full warrant for faith.

St. Victor. Yes; as it is the full warrant for all human belief in society that witnesses say so, and tell you, for instance, of a place called Pekin or Calcutta—whether those names still remain for you as mere marks upon the map, or are caught up by the mind in a live association of previous experience and information. In this connection, as showing the difference between a live perception and an abstract conception, the passage of Job is quoted: "With the hearing of the ear I have heard of Thee; but now my eye seeth Thee." [1]

And so it comes to pass that things tangible, palpable, sensible, which mice and frogs can see as well as ourselves, are greeted by so many people with the "real assent," which you have cited; while things spiritual, eternal and divine, which are the native atmosphere of an intellect, seem far away in the hazy distance—seem unreal, ideal, misty, even though tinged with gold by the sun, or with silver by the moon. To the vacant mind or, shall I say, to the stomach of Materialism a mess of pottage is much more "real" in that sense than a birthright; the Materialist will sell this for that any day, as Esau did, and will boast of it. Such mentality is well illustrated by St. Bernardine's simile of the dog with his bone; says the Saint, you may offer the dog to make him king or Pope; but he will still prefer his bone! See the difference of valuation in appreciating a broken limb or a broken soul. To a broken limb the attitude of the mind is most emphatic and

[1] Job 42. 5.

"real"; and you will never hear the end of it from the patient. To a soul and its career broken by a mortal sin, with the eternal loss of God, many a person pays not the slightest heed, and does not catch any meaning in the obvious truth which made a saint of Francis Xavier: "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul!" [1] Still less does such a one rise with any vividness of assent to the height of that religious sentiment: "My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God." [2]

[1] Matt. 16. 26. [2] Ps. 83. 3.

Chapter XII

PRAGMATISM

Benjamin. Well, you seem to lay emphasis enough on facts, and on assenting to them. But we cannot help doing so if we have our wits about us.

St. Victor. That point about facts is directed against a morbid mentality, which affects to fabricate things, as Idealists do. Or, if it does not fabricate its facts and project them, it affects to withhold all rational assent from things actual and real, as Sceptics do, who know no truth outside by its evidence nor admit any certainty inside.

Benjamin. There remains then the school of hard and dry facts. But we have always understood that to be no very amiable school, nor very rational, nor intellectual, nor graced with the slightest touch of the ideal.

St. Victor. You refer to the hard, gritty frame of mind, which rasps out facts alone, and will not cast a glance at causes, ideals, rules, reasons. Listen to this American: "Dedicate your life," says he, "to men and women, to personal relationships. You will find that the causes take care of themselves." Now the dedication of your life to a right object would be right enough, as all religious of the Catholic Church exemplify in their lives of devotion. But to be shiftless and ignorant about the reasons why, and the objects wherefore, is what no workman would tolerate in the commonest apprentice. So here you have Pragmatism, which looks only to results. Whether things are governed by luck or law, by

chances or causes, does not concern the Pragmatist at all. Yet, as was said of old, it is a fool who trusts to luck; a wise man, to cause and effect.

Benjamin. When people speak of results, do they not imply the operation of causes? as you remark the American said: Causes will take care of themselves.

St. Victor. There's the fun of the thing—to admit there are causes, and say, mind only their effects! Let these come about anyhow. You need not know; you need not care; just take things at random. You may be simply wrong or perverse, looking for figs on briars, or grapes on thistles; all you profess to be doing is looking for the good things, for grapes and figs and any other plunder of results. They "grow" somehow and somewhere! Pass the spoils round, wherever they come from! Whence? Oh! that does not concern the pragmatical frame of mind, at least in matters of religion. But what does concern it is just what comes home to the baby or the child—the grown fig, the grown grapes, the grown peach.—Don't you see that this shutting the eyes to the process of cause and effect is not only a denial of all philosophy, but an offence to plain common sense. In common life, when we praise or blame a child we are only establishing the relation between an effect and its cause. We say: You have done well, meaning that this good effect comes from you as its cause. We say: You have done ill, signifying that this bad effect is referred to you as responsible.

Benjamin. But does it appear that the pragmatical mind eschews causes altogether?

St. Victor. By way of an afterthought, it will hitch results to causes, which often enough don't belong to them. Or it will attach results as immediate effects to causes which are very remote. For

instance, every one knows that the art and science of Europe are related to Christianity as their fostering genius. But Christianity is not to be judged by art and science, as if they were the immediate and direct effect of its spirit. Still less is it to be gauged by riches, prosperity and power, as if it were a commercial concern or military establishment. The immediate and direct effect of Christianity is that all nations be taught the truths of revelation communicated by Christ; that all be saved by being baptized, and by being instructed "to observe," said Our Lord, "all things whatsoever I have commanded you"; and to this effect He gave a promise to His Church, "behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world"; as also another promise, and a sanction: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned." [1]

* * *

Benjamin. Our Lord appealed to this rule of results as a criterion, when He said, "By their fruits you shall know them."

St. Victor. Yes, when you know what to expect. Then you see whether results tally. And, according as they tally or not, you infer that the genuine causes are working or not. The causes in question, of which Our Lord speaks, are the principles of true doctrine and virtuous life. If the fruits you see are error and vice, then the bushes, as Our Lord's figure signifies, must be thorns and thistles. If the fruit turns out to be a wild grape, *labrusca*, clearly it does not come from "the choicest vine," which the Lord says He planted.[2] If the fruit is a wild berry, then

[1] Matt. 28. 18–20. Mark 16. 16. [2] Isai. 5. 2.

you know it is not of the sweet and fruitful olive, which He has planted in the house of God.[1]

Hence, in those words which you quote, Our Lord, far from swamping causes in results, is inculcating just the opposite lesson, that out of results we are to find the nature of the causes: "Beware of false prophets," He says—"By their fruits you shall know them"—whether the pretenders are genuine or are corrupt.[2]

So too is it with business men, who pay workmen by results. What results? Anything out of anything, in a happy-go-lucky way? Or something very definite, out of a certain material, by a process defined, according to a certain ideal, and issuing as a fact complete and genuine, because put forth and limited by all its causes, efficient, constituent and final?

Benjamin. Would a pragmatist make any objection to this definition of results?

St. Victor. How can he possibly understand results in any definite sense? His is the happy-go-lucky way: "Shut your eyes, and open your mouth, and see what the gods will send you!" If he fumbles into a good "result," his only moral can be: "What a lucky hit!" If he stumbles on an unlucky "result," he has to go floundering into something else. For, as you quoted the American, causes are to take care of themselves; and you are not to know, direct or govern them. That is just the way insects live; but with a difference. They go sucking up juice or sap or perhaps blood, wherever they find it; but the difference is that they have an instinct unerring to guide them. Consider man without such instincts; and what have you left, when you have dropped good sense?

There is Pragmatism in religion. A French ob-

[1] Ps. 51. 10. [2] Matt. 7. 15–20.

server recently said that there were 300 religions in the United States; and all alike were willing to be judged by results. That is pragmatic. But, if there are 300 religions, there must be 300 differences. Then what about the results, or fruits of the tree which God planted, when there are 300 trees, all different? Clearly the fruits here, in 299 cases, are not those of the one "choicest vine." This is mere empiricism in religion, working a thing to see what comes of it, or looking at others, and standing by to praise or blame, as the thing turns out well or ill. Really what merits praise or blame is not results, but the application of the causes. This application we can control. Results we cannot. They will be as they will be.

Benjamin. You imply that there are not different views of morality, but only the one which issues from right teaching and doctrine, that of the "choicest vine."

St. Victor. Yes, because truth is not self-contradictory. Our understanding of truth should reflect it, in its simplicity and unity. The obligation follows of practising that truth in life; and this is sound Morality. *Intellectus extensione fit practicus*, the understanding of principle runs out into practice, the knowledge of truth lighting the way, showing the free will its path into action, and into "doing the truth," as Our Lord said.[1] The opposite result is what St. John called, "making a lie."[2] Here you have Ethics or Morality, which present very fixed ideas of what human life should be in practice. These fixed ideas may be reduced to one word: *Veritas Vitæ*, the Truth of Life—living the truth here, which sets you free,[3] and in that liberty of the children of God attaining to truth eternal. Anything short of

[1] John 3. 21. [2] Apoc. 22. 15. [3] John 8. 32.

that, whatever it be that can manage to run wild in 300 different directions, is not truth. It may be policy, or some application of that rule which prevails in politics, and is called "Expediency"—a rule which you observe every day.

BENJAMIN. Are you making me out to be a politician?

ST. VICTOR. You are politic every day, when you forge your way along the pavement. You have only one object—to get through. You take the line of least resistance, and here you have arrived, and are talking to me. Expediency in social matters is the way of getting on, dictated by the quality or knack called "Tact." It is a policy of moving on, just as people are bidden to do by the police on the sidewalk. It does not get embarrassed by principle of any kind, according to the maxim: "You will make a fool of yourself, if you stick to principle." But it is in politics that Expediency thrives, as a practical principle routing out all moral principle; for, as an old saying puts it, "Morality means bad business."

Such pragmatical, empirical, politic ways of doing things imply no doctrine, human or divine. They are only an art, a *savoir faire*, to do or to make things, *agibilia* or *factibilia*. Their criterion is, how the thing tastes at the end, according to the homely proverb: The proof of the pudding is in the eating of it. That's what Pragmatism comes to.

* * *

BENJAMIN. But no art can proceed without a doctrine, or some principles of science behind it.

ST. VICTOR. Oh, yes, it can! It may go by the rule of thumb.

BENJAMIN. Well, that is a doctrine of some kind.

ST. VICTOR. But scarcely a science. Now, to

speak only of the last twelve months, I could show you some hundred articles, books, and also sermons, which have no more conception of Christianity in them, or capital behind them, or fare to live on than just so much—facts dished up as results—causes being left to take care of themselves.

BENJAMIN. Then so far they agree with you, and make as much of facts as you do.

ST. VICTOR. Not by half! They do away with the whole value of the fact, which is nothing without its relations. Facts are not science, nor doctrine, nor system; no, not a thousand of them! Facts are not a religion; no, not a world of them! A strand of pebbles, or a quarry of stones was never yet a house. They are only pebbles, or blocks. Facts are but the raw material of science, of life, of religion.

BENJAMIN. So the pragmatist's facts are at least the foundation of science.

ST. VICTOR. Yes, if he builds anything on them, and on their relations to one another, or to their causes. Without these relations there is neither law, justice, nor justification in facts or results as such. Even if they exercise the charm which is called success, that does not justify them. Honesty might commend them from the side of morality; but it can justify facts and results, even when they do not succeed. If dishonesty succeeds in making a railroad king, the vice does not justify the result, as the result does not justify the vice. That would be a vicious circle indeed.

The description of right and law is very different: "*Judicia Domini vera, justificata in semetipsa*, The judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves";[1] because the Commandments of God are primary and universal principles of natural law and

[1] Ps. 18. 10.

justice, standing on their own merits, and holding in every place, time and particular case. They are principles or moral causes that judge results and facts. Facts do not judge them.

* * *

BENJAMIN. Then what does all this come to? Did you not first put up facts, as the only things real? Now you seem to put them down, as not being ideal.

ST. VICTOR. There are extremes on either side. Against the Idealist visionary you must affirm the fact. Against the matter-of-fact Pragmatist, affirm the idea. So, if you ask what it all comes to, I answer that the value of facts is to be realized in their relations to one another and to other things. It is not realized, if the facts are left like a heap of things lying one on top of the other.

Take an example. Christianity rests on facts, that God became Man, that He lived, spoke, acted and died. Is that all? Far from it! These facts have a relation to each and every one among the children of Adam. The relation means the application of the facts, their relevancy to each and every person in the light of his end, in the understanding of his causes, in the use of the means for making his journey a complete circuit, from First Cause in the creation of the person to Last End in his fruition of God. This relation answers the very pertinent questions, What are you here for? Where do you come from? Where are you going to? And how must you do it?

BENJAMIN. What they call "metaphysical" questions!

ST. VICTOR. And, because they will not have such "metaphysics," and the truths which are conveyed in the answers, they have nothing to their account

but bald facts. Ask them, "What is truth"? the answer comes, You will find it "by living it." But what am I to live? The answer: What you are to find. So they whirl about in the merry-go-round of another vicious circle, since they would not take the straight line of a little "metaphysics" and common sense.

You see, facts and relations are to be taken together. So taken, they form a system, with unity and vitality, as we see in the Christian religion, which is a unit in truth, and at the same time a great cause in action. It is a cause definite and universal, streaming out to produce its effects in all subjects, who will link themselves to the cause. For this purpose, each and every potential subject of redemption must apply the universal cause to himself, and make its general potency become effective in his own particular case. Since he has free will, the application is to be made by himself. So does St. Paul speak of filling up the things that are wanting to the sufferings of Christ.[1] A universal cause has always to be applied so. The light of the sun is such; you must come into it. The waters of the fountains flow for all; but you must approach to draw from them. In redemption too, free will is appealed to. You must come forward with your supply of good will, to take your share of the ransom.

We are not stocks or stones, inert constituents in creation. We belong to the order of reason and free will. We are not babies to be taken sleeping, vouched for by elders. When once we are old enough to know, we are like our first parent, who was put in a garden "to dress it and keep it."[2] We have to work our garden, that is, everything in us, and whatever may be of service outside of us. We have to employ

[1] Coloss. 1. 24. [2] Gen. 2. 15.

our faculties and powers, our sensibilities and passions, in the light of intelligence, and under the control of free will. We are not to be "unprofitable," or, as the Hebrew word has it, "putrid" factors, rotting in decay. Hear the description of that degeneration, which inverts the process of our development: "They are all gone aside, they are become unprofitable [*or putrid*] together; there is none that doeth good, no, not one! Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they acted deceitfully; the poison of asps is under their lips."[1] Here you have a mess of things, all decomposing; because the same Sun of Justice, which invigorates life and truth, does only accelerate the opposite process of putrefaction; when, to use the pragmatist's phrase, the causes are left to take care of themselves; when God and His law are not held worthy of a thought; or, to use the psalmist's phrase in the passage just quoted, when the fool even comes to say in his heart, there is no God at all. That is just where the charm comes in of letting causes take care of themselves; you leave God out, the First Cause, as you cannot do if you take in causes. He becomes an alien, ignored in His own creation.

If you want to hear all this formulated with arrogance, here you have it in the words of a modern poet:

> God and gods
> Are man's mistake; no brain exists
> Behind the galaxies, above them or beneath;
> No thought inhabiteth eternity,
> No reason, no intelligence at all,
> Till conscious life began.

And where does the life begin? Answer: In spontaneous generation. And how does it climb? Answer:

[1] Ps. 13. 1, 3; 52. 4.

By an arboreal ancestry. And where does it go to? Answer: The potential energy of the sun. Another poet, addressing a departed friend, takes up the strain:

> I seem in star and flower
> To feel thee some diffusive power.

You see, though Pragmatism discarded causes, leaving them to take care of themselves, it has brought us back to Origins, in a kind of negative way: "No reason, no intelligence at all, till conscious life began!" There is a great charm about origins to-day. They are supposed to gauge the highest level of what is originated. And so, if "we are born of nothing, and after this shall be as if we had not been,"[1] then our morality need not be much between such an origin and such an end. Religion may be left out altogether.

* * *

Benjamin. Well, but if they are at origins they are at causes, which is just what you wanted.

St. Victor. Not quite. Of course, every cause is an origin, but not every origin is a cause. An origin may show you no more than that the thing grew, and where, and when. The watercress has its origin in the brook; but the brook is not the cause of the cress which grows there. Where does the seed come from; and the first seed? and, if from an agent, where does he come from, and the first agent? And so you have to reach ultimate causes in retrospect; and you find the First Cause in effect. This is Metaphysics; which is too plain to be liked. Hence people limit their view to History, or what they can drag in under the name and pretence of history; and they call the whole subject, "Historical Origins."

[1] Wisd. 2.2.

They are on the search now for the origins of Christianity, in order to evolve it out of fetishes, totems and taboos, and to express Christian thought in the formulas of paganism. The Academician whom you mentioned before went back to the Early Church, as others go back to the Primitive Church, in order to find "origins," to insist upon things remaining as they were at the origin, that the living Church should be a kind of petrifaction; and that nothing live, vital, mordant be admitted in the Church's constitution. A certain noble writer who died lately, having been a sort of Catholic in his time, propounded that we knew nothing of Christianity, unless we knew its historical origins. Is that true?

BENJAMIN. Perhaps he meant that not in an absolute sense, but in relation only to specialists, theologians and historians?

ST. VICTOR. No one, indeed, if he is mature enough in years, is a Christian at all, without knowing some history, to wit: That the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us, and died for us. But, as you imply in your excuse for that historian, it is not true that all of us need be antiquarians. Without that we can know our catechism, and be good moralists, yea, and metaphysicians too. Let the Chicago child speak for millions of his kind. He was the only eye-witness available in a great legal case. On his appearing, the judge objected; he was too young. Counsel desired that some questions should be put to try him. "My child," asked the judge, "do you know what an oath means?" "It means, I must tell the truth." "And what if you don't tell the truth?" "That would be a sin." "And what is a sin?" "It is a bad mark with God." The old judge was visibly affected, and admitted the child as a witness.—There was

more intelligence there of Christianity, and its whole message regarding God and man, than in many a library of historical origins, and more perhaps than in many a collection of original historians. You have intelligence of doctrine, and the application of doctrine to life, which is morality.

* * *

BENJAMIN. I met a person who, by baptism and education, should be a Catholic. He was coming from a modernist lecture; and he sneered at all that kind of thing which you have just illustrated. He called morality, "asceticism."

ST. VICTOR. Was that by way of pitching things high, or pitching them low, to get rid of them? It is not uncommon to pitch common things too high, and so get rid of them; for, as the proverb says, "the better is enemy of the good." Since it is quite beyond the generality of mankind to reach that independence of self-control, which is signified by the word, "asceticism," your acquaintance called morality by that name and so ruled it out of court and out of life. This is what Jansenism persistently did, pitching things too high, and smoothing the way for things very low.

BENJAMIN. The astounding observation was likewise made that asceticism spoils good looks; that this was against the teaching of Christ; for good looks made one more pleasing in the sight of God—as was illustrated in the case of Mary Magdalen!

ST. VICTOR. Indeed! Well, we should never overlook the possibility that such persons may sometimes be saying what they mean. If that person meant what he said, there is one reply; if not, there is another. We are in face of such an alternative as disconcerted Lord Chesterfield on one occasion. He

said: "In charity, I must consider the man a liar; for otherwise I should have to believe him a brute." I say, your acquaintance may impale himself on either horn, that of the slanderer's libel, or of the apostate's snarl. The way of the old pagans towards the dumb gods they knew was normally that of respect. The red Indians, who learnt many things from the whites, seem never to have graduated into the art of blaspheming. But, when you were favoured with Christ's teaching, and asceticism, and good looks and sanctity, all in a mess, you were just then in contact with the Fourth Degree of Mentality.

BENJAMIN. The Fourth Degree of Mentality! What do you mean?

ST. VICTOR. *Nec intelligo, nec credo*, I don't understand anything, and I don't believe anything.

BENJAMIN. And the other degrees?

ST. VICTOR. Three go before; and several follow after. But you can't appreciate the degrees, unless you understand the thing. This we were inquiring into before. What is Mentality?

BENJAMIN. A state of mind.

ST. VICTOR. Yes, properly. And, as pure reason and good sense may be conceived to engender a state of mind, Mentality need not exclude a right frame of mind. But, in common usage, the word evidently signifies a state of mind qualified. Qualified—by what? By something that is not reason; but is either in it, giving a twist to it, as errors and fallacies do; or is beside it, dragging it one way or other, as do sentiments, emotions, prepossessions, prejudices.

It was all very well for us, awhile ago, to be talking of truth as presented to an unsophisticated mind, and of the mind as a spotless mirror reflecting the truth presented. But can we really assume that

our mind is strictly a kind of pure reason? Short of the Mind Divine, when "in Thy light we shall see light,"[1] we have at present no such thing as pure reason. Our mind is bundled up in a composite mass of emotions, of likes and dislikes, of passions that push and drag the will; and the will goes pushing and dragging the mind; and the mind comes sneaking cravenly round "to be of their opinion," as some one said: "I brought my mind to be of my opinion."

You see there can be a great difference between knowledge and knowledge—between the wholeheartedness of assent to truth when the man's intellect and sentiment are both enlisted, and the mere stillness of certainty when nothing but the dry light of the truth's evidence arrests the mind, without engaging sentiments and emotions. You may notice too the difference between the tranquil certainty of real knowledge and the restless mobility of mere opinion, which is no certain knowledge at all, but is only a fluctuating product of partial views seen in a moist light of sentiment, prejudice and passion.

> Give me that man
> That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
> In my heart's core.

And says the same sage:

> Blest are those,
> Whose blood and judgment are so well commingled,
> That they are not a pipe for fortune's finger
> To sound what stop she please.

The angels themselves fell from heaven like lightning, because their intelligence was beclouded by the fumes of pride; and they never reached the

[1] Ps. 35. 10.

state of bliss, where "in Thy light we shall see light." Adam, too, who knew everything in nature by its name, that is, understood its substance, who knew himself and conversed with God, lost his head when a woman talked, and forgot himself and God.

Suppose you liken reason to a light: "The light of Thy countenance is signed upon us."[1] Just see how lights are treated, with all the vagaries of electric setting and pitching, around angles, through transparencies, which half reveal and half conceal; down to those blue panes in the street, which were meant to hide the lights from aeroplane raiders. The blue glass just lets you see that the light is there, but it takes care not to light up anything. Our Lord said, that the light may be under a bushel. He went farther still. Speaking expressly of our mind, of the direction it conveys to the will, and of the intention which the will then forms, He said that light may be darkness: "If thy eye be evil, the whole body shall be darksome. If then the light that is in thee be darkness, the darkness itself, how great shall it be!"

Mentality in this sense is the colour of an eye affected with disease, which claps its miserable tints on the things it looks at. Or it is the nervousness, which makes the eye blink, look away, overlook, skip, or simply shut up. Mentality can break up the even surface of a pellucid mind, and make everything outside seem to dance at sixes and sevens. Sir Henry Newbolt tells us just now of the futurist poet's mentality, that it "throws at you the elements of matter and nervous excitement, for you to make of them what you can."

So you see we have drifted from Pragmatism to an extreme phase of Mentality, which qualifies you to be like "children tossed to and fro, and carried

[1] Ps. 4. 7.

about by every wind of doctrine by the wickedness of men";[1] to be "like the troubled sea which cannot rest, and its waters cast up dirt and mire."[2] Against this evil it devolves upon us, by simplicity and virtue, to keep the eye of the mind as steady and limpid as possible: "The light of thy body is thy eye. If thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome."[3]

Now, as you have helped to define what Mentality is, I will merely add, that I have the Mentalities, writ large, all in a row. Do you wish to walk through my gallery?

[1] Eph. 4. 14. [2] Isai. 57. 20. [3] Matt. 6. 22, 23.

Chapter XIII

MENTALITY, DIVERS DEGREES

Benjamin. Yes, I'll walk with you; as I have often by your leave

> Chased the fleeing tints of growing thought,
> Which trace the changing pattern

of my life; and you have often encouraged me to challenge your thought, while your eye grew bright as I unravelled all your mind.

St. Victor. For our part let us conform to the rule of the Wise Man, that, what we have learnt without guile, we communicate without stint; since the riches of wisdom are an infinite treasure, commending us to God for gifts not our own.[1]

Benjamin. What are the Degrees of Mentality?

St. Victor. They are different ways of opening the mind, or shutting it, to faith and knowledge; or, if you like it, to belief and science. The first degree is that of St. Anselm's, and also of the men of St. Victor as against Abelard: *Credo ut intelligam*, I believe in order to understand.

The second is Abelard's, which looks like an inversion of the first: *Intelligo ut credam*, I understand in order to believe.

The third is that of Rationalism, pure and simple: *Intelligo ne credam*, I understand in order not to believe.

The fourth is that of your acquaintance, who made fun of things divine: *Nec intelligo, nec credo*,

[1] Wisd. 7. 13, 14.

I don't understand, and I don't believe; and I don't want to. Now are those enough?

Benjamin. You seem to hint at more degrees.

St. Victor. Two more then! The fifth degree is: *Credo, quia absurdum*, I believe because the thing is absurd; and there is nothing else to do with it but gulp it down, if interest or passion or fashion prescribes.

The sixth and last for our purpose is that which has been described by St. James: *Dæmones credunt et contremiscunt*, The demons believe and tremble.

* * *

Benjamin. St. Anselm's is not quite clear, but it sounds well enough: "I believe, in order to understand." That of Abelard's though does not sound badly at all: "I understand, in order to believe."

St. Victor. The first degree, "I believe, in order to understand," means taking a high stand from the first, a vantage-ground in matters of intelligence. Belief is the first rule of understanding, in supernatural and in natural affairs alike. In the supernatural life of faith divine, it is the privilege acquired by baptism that, accepting by faith the message which God sends us, we advance to the understanding of so precious a communication. So too, in matters that are natural and civil, belief in what we are told, acceptance of what is handed down to us, has been the privilege and warrant of our civilization. Savages likewise, as far as they have begun life with the capital of tradition, and accepted it by faith from their elders, so far have been saved from the helplessness of being left, each waif and wastrel, to the mercy of his own poor devices.

Faith—every one lives by it as a primary condition for moving on, doing or understanding anything; and

that not only the faith of children in their parents, and their implicit belief in teachers, but the faith of people in mature years, who are old enough to know by experience. People in mature age are every day taking one another's word, the word of persons unknown; they put faith in cheques and bonds; faith in the word of agents, ship-captains, train-conductors; and they entrust their lives blankly to unknown chances on the bond of belief, to wit, that others know, mean the right thing, and are capable.

If you will not tolerate the life of faith, because you are deceived sometimes, you will have to go and become a lonely Robinson Crusoe in an island of the Pacific, or a solitary savage, a mere degenerate of the backwoods. As St. Augustine observes in his book on the *Utility of Believing:* "*Auctoritate quidem decipi miserum est, sed certe miserius non moveri*, It is a miserable thing to be deceived by authority, but certainly more miserable not to go by it." And, just in the line of St. Anselm's thought, that he believes in order to understand, Theodoret, a Greek Father of six centuries earlier, drove the argument right home. He said: "It is a stupid thing and intolerable that whereas, with the masters of all other arts, knowledge is the attribute of the teacher, and faith that of the learner, it is only in the learning of divine things that a contrary order is followed; and knowledge is exacted of the learner before faith."

* * *

Benjamin. They call it Credulity to take what is told you.

St. Victor. They call things by all kinds of names. They call Christianity by the name of traditionalism, conventionalism, romanticism. They ransack the dust-bins of every castaway use or

abuse or notion or theorem which they have been familiar with, and they favour you with a participation in their finds—though they need not go far among their leavings and offscourings to find such a thing as credulity. It comes to hand everywhere.

For what is credulity? The very word shows you that it has something to do with creed, or belief. But it is the habit of believing in an off-hand sort of way, with the levity of thoughtlessness, and without the guarantee of a sufficient reason for assent or dissent. It is true that any one may be taken off his guard sometimes, and see himself stranded, the victim of falsity or downright falsehood. But it is the habit of the thing that makes the credulous dupe. Now just thirty years ago I read in *Nature* a statement by Herbert Spencer on Organic Evolution, to the effect and in the express terms, that it was a "Creed." In the thirty years that have elapsed since, there have been well nigh as many revisions of that Creed as there have been years—like the educational programmes of Continental Ministers of Instruction, which have come out at about the rate of one a year. The popular mind knows nothing of the vouchers for so many assertions called Science. But the doctrines are printed and they must be true, until they are shovelled away to make room for contradictory assertions which must be truer, just so long as they are not shoved away too. Meanwhile they who believe in the "Creed" of science, as Spencer called it, implicitly accept whatever is printed and published, however unknown the writers, their characters and motives. All that is credulity. It does not rise to the level of faith or belief—although, if it pretends to be science, what business has it to deal with belief or faith at all?

See the function of faith, creed and credulity in

History, which is held to be a science. The stock in trade of all historians is nothing but a vast accumulation of material taken on faith. I don't say that all of them are credulous, at least when they are not on the track of religion and the Church. I only say that the science which they profess goes about finding what others have reported; ascertaining, if possible, that the reporter was trustworthy; and then republishing, or doing the matter up anew. As long as they are honest, and where they mean to be so, they are entirely men of faith. Otherwise, and in all other directions, they are purveyors to wholesale credulity.

As the warrant for faith or belief in human affairs is our ignorance or error, which makes us lean on others and draw on their knowledge, so the warrant for credulity is levity; whereof the Wise Man says: "*Qui cito credit, levis corde est.*"[1] It is levity of the heart that is the nurse of credulity.

There is a warrant likewise for unbelief or infidelity. It is either the same levity in one's own regard; or it is some practical interest in exploiting other people's ignorance and error. The liveliest source of interest is a restless desire to stave truth off from bearing on morality in life. And, when once a wrong principle has been adopted or credulously accepted, Aristotle's proposition holds with inexorable force: It is impossible, he says, not to reach evil at the end from an error committed at the beginning. Having lost the connection of logic and principle with life, the farther people go the worse they fare; as Shakespeare lays it down:

> Things bad begun make themselves strong by ill.

Then minds will persuade themselves that nothing can be believed with the tranquillity of certainty;

[1] Ecclus. 19. 4.

as a certain romancer exclaims: "Faith—not unwavering! for what faith is so?"; or, as a poet's screed has it about something which is neither faith nor science, but is good enough perhaps for his scepticism and irreligion:

> For nothing worthy proving can be proven,
> Nor yet disproven. Wherefore, be thou wise.
> Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,
> And cling to faith beyond the forms of faith.

BENJAMIN. What does that mean?

ST. VICTOR. Oh, possibly modern "mysticism," which we may leave to the Modernists.

Now you see that, when St. Anselm took up the position, "I believe, in order to understand," he was taking in the light of God's mind, either to see better the things of nature which he saw already, or to apprehend things beyond nature and above it, truths supernatural which God alone can impart, and of which any slender ray is worth whole sheaves of light reflected from things mundane and sublunary. He that sees in the light of Him who sees all is, as St. Gregory observes, in a fair position to see all things in His light. So it was, St. Ambrose dilated upon those words of Our Lord to Peter: "Heave out into the deep!" He said: "Heave out into the deep of disputations. What so deep as the depth of divine wisdom, and the abyss of riches there!" The words of Isaias, as the Septuagint renders them, are energetic: "If you do not believe, neither shall you understand."[1]

From this high and bright level of mentality and contemplation we can look down on all the lower ranges of thought and speculation.

* * *

[1] Isai. (LXX), 7. 9.

Benjamin. Abelard's proposition seems fair enough: "I understand, in order to believe." You said this was the second degree of mentality.

St. Victor. But there are three meanings to that one proposition. Two of them are right, and one is wrong. It is precisely the wrong one that the Schoolmen ascribed to Abelard. They were men who knew their business; and they made him out to be a mere Rationalist.

In the first place, "I understand, in order to believe" has this correct meaning, that you endeavour to understand more and better what you know and believe already; and you do so for the purpose of believing more firmly. So St. Ambrose said: "Heave out into the deep of disputations!" spread your nets farther and wider, and catch more. This is the object of Divinity as a science; and is the effect of Divinity, when that science is not thwarted by sinister motives and an ill-disposed heart. "For wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins."[1]

Benjamin. You imply that a pure mind and heart not subject to sin have a special fitness for understanding?

St. Victor. Yes; and I call your attention to a difference of degrees here. You have said to me before this that all is light to your mind. Now I say that, though you and I have never known what a cloud or shadow is on any article of faith or on any direction issuing from the divine authority of the Church, still we have an imperfect idea of the intensity with which profound and saintly minds adhere to every truth and declaration, contained in the deposit of the Church's faith, or proceeding from it. For the moral certainty of faith, or that fixity of

[1] Wisd. 1. 4.

knowledge which comes of truth settling in the mind, can be intensified, as a nail well driven can be driven still deeper into the wall. So the father of the lunatic boy cried out to Our Lord: "I do believe, O Lord; help my unbelief."[1] In this sense, a lesser degree of faith, though stable, is a kind of privation, or of unbelief, in comparison with something better and stronger. It is a stepping-stone for something higher. In like manner, every refutation of an objection is an intensive cultivation of the certainty already possessed; and therefore you see St. Thomas heading every truth in his thousands of articles with preliminary objections, which make the light brighter by contrast, and the day so much the clearer for the lifting of the mist. The Apostles put the growth of moral certainty in an absolute form, saying to Our Lord simply this: "Increase our faith."[2]

* * *

Benjamin. Then the first meaning of Abelard's proposition would agree with the tenor of that daily prayer for increase in faith, when we ask for *vividos fidei, spei et caritatis sensus*.

St. Victor. So far good! In the second place, the same proposition, "I understand, in order to believe," may very correctly denote the process antecedent to faith, when a mind applies itself to perceiving the reasons for believing at all. These reasons, or motives, are the facts of the case, and their relevancy. They are the why and the wherefore for us, who are required to believe the Word of God—for us, who are so prodigal of belief in the word of man. They are the title-deeds of our religion.

The highest understanding, however, is never so unquenchably thirsty for knowledge that, if the dis-

[1] Mark 9. 23. [2] Luke 17. 5.

covery of truth is likely to meddle with the passions of a man, he will make much headway by the line of inquiry through reason alone. Not that the logic is not stringent; nay, some one used the expression, that it was all "too logical—to be true!" That is to say, there was no escaping the truth; but, the passions dragging too heavily, there was nothing to do but disown the process of reaching it. Thus we have seen men of talent producing books, which might seem to be an introduction, inviting people and enlightening them on the way to Catholic doctrine and faith; and yet they themselves have stayed just where they were, showing the way to others, and remaining stationary themselves.

In this sense, Hugh and Adam of St. Victor urged against Abelard that, though God is truth, still He is to be sought more by the heart and the will than by the intellect. Truth in general is to be looked for in the quiet exercise and insistence of humility, docility and obedience; as the Ethiopian chamberlain showed so well when, in answer to Philip's question about Isaias: "Thinkest thou that thou understandest what thou readest?" he replied: "How can I unless some man show me?" and he desired Philip to come up into the chariot and sit with him.[1] The gentle virtues of the heart diffuse the necessary warmth and heat for the comfort of a mind, which is lighted indeed with truth from above, but stands shivering in the cold dry air. Our nature being so composite, it is ever true that, if our will and its purposes have to be permeated by the light of thought, no less must our thought be penetrated and stimulated by the warmth of a good will. Light and heat!

So Our Lord said: "If any man will do the will

[1] Acts 8. 30, 31.

of Him, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."[1] There must be a *pius credulitatis affectus*, the sincere wish to believe, if intelligence is to become assent when the motives are sufficient; for *nemo credens, nisi volens*, all faith requires will. In various matters, Our Lord used the formula, "If you will," "If any man will." And, as one of the effects of prayer is to call out and put in play the gentle and mellowing virtues of the soul, Our Lord insisted precisely upon prayer, that great exercise of religion. To pray, "Lead, kindly Light!" is of itself the beginning of illumination. And thus one person, Lady Herbert of Lea, who had passed through the phases from darkness into the broad daylight of faith, said of St. Augustine that, at the time of his conversion, he had wanted to see clearly before he knelt in prayer; whereas it was necessary to kneel first in order to see clearly.

Here then is the process, "*Intelligo ut credam*, I understand in order to believe," using the motives of credibility for advancing towards faith, for opening the mind to reason and being guided to belief. In Dryden's words:

> As on high
> Those rolling fires discover but the sky,
> Not light us here; so reason's glimmering ray
> Was lent, not to assure our doubtful way,
> But guide us upward.

The Wise Man shows what an essential part the will has in the process of intelligence; since from the will comes the desire of wisdom, a loving solicitude in the search for it, a faithful observance of law, and as the result a happy immortality. He says of wisdom: "The beginning of her is the most true desire of

[2] John 7. 17.

discipline. And the care of discipline is love. And love is the keeping of her laws. And the keeping of her laws is the firm foundation of incorruption."[1]

These two meanings of Abelard's formula, "I understand, in order to believe," agree with Ambrose's: "Heave out into the deep of disputations." But now there is a third meaning, in which it agrees with the Third Degree of Mentality, that of Rationalism: "*Intelligo ne credam*, I understand in order not to believe." That was Abelard's. And, being thus unmasked, it is to be considered as identical with the following degree, that of Rationalism.

* * *

Benjamin. How can that be? Abelard's proposition, "I understand in order to believe," is just the contradictory of what you declare Rationalism's to be: "I understand, in order not to believe."

St. Victor. But did you not see how Abelard's agreed with Anselm's in two meanings, though the propositions did not agree in terms? What wonder then that it should be one with the Rationalist's in a third meaning, though sounding contradictory in words?

Benjamin. Well, if on one side he agreed with the first degree of mentality, and on the other with the third, then there is no second, and you might leave Abelard out.

St. Victor. My dear Benjamin, if you left out everything that masquerades in this world, there would be very little work left for publishers and reviewers. What are the theories and tenets, and doctrines and many "sciences" and most novels, with other things which fill the literary world's horizon week after week, but painted veils or webs

[1] Wisd. 6. 18, 19.

covering something else of a different complexion? Tear off the masks and their welter of paint, and you will find only two or three types of complexion underneath—white, black or yellow. They are only the same things dressed up otherwise, like that handful of indispensables on the stage, who do duty for soldiers, assemblies, courts, mobs, and what not!

So, if I say with Abelard that "I understand, in order to believe," but I mean with Rationalism, that I understand what I see, and what I see with my two eyes that only do I believe, and no more, then I am a Rationalist: "I understand, in order not to believe." For you are only playing with words. You don't believe what you merely see. Belief is more than that. The cricket on the hearth or the colt in the close can see; but they can't believe. See how the Samaritans, who were looking at Our Lord, saw more than what they were looking at; they believed what they did not see. There's the triumph of intelligence! They said to the woman: "We now believe, not for thy saying; for we ourselves have heard Him, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world."[1] How was that? They had not seen Him save the world; they had only looked at Him and heard Him speak. But they knew more, by faith! The Apostle St. Thomas exclaimed: "My Lord and my God!"[2] What had he seen? Not God whom no one can see and live. He had only verified the fact of Our Lord's deadly wounds in the living Person before him. That was enough; he believed, rising by reason to what those signs accredited, and accepting by faith what was so brought home. God's sign and seal, by speech, by act, by prophecy or miracle, put to a truth conveyed, is as good as the sign manual of the person who writes you a letter, or sends you a

[1] John 4. 42. [2] *Ibid.* 20. 28.

cheque from 1000 miles away. You accept the fact that he is speaking. Everyone does. You believe, though you have only a scrip before you.

In supernatural matters, which require a light higher than that of mere reason, the higher light is always held out to us, is streaming in if we will let it, and is illuminating our assent. When "Simon Peter answered and said: Thou art Christ the Son of the living God," Our Lord replied: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven."[1] This is the revelation from the Father, tendered to support as a divine grace every act of divine belief which we elicit. For God "will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth";[2] and He fails no one, who is true to himself and to his lights of good sense and a good will.

You see how the whole life of the faithful and devout comes to be a divine life in quite another order than that of purblind reason: "My just man liveth by faith"[3]—a life so different in its principles and instincts from that of the unbelieving, as every day's experience shows us in this world! The faithful are not like the rest of men. In this sense of our being illumined by God to believe, Christ Our Lord cited the prophets, that we should "all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard of the Father, and hath learned, cometh to me."[4] And so St. Paul congratulated the Thessalonians on this divine light by which they had believed, "because," said he, "when you received from us the word of the message of God, you accepted it, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God, who worketh in you that have believed."[5]

[1] Matt. 16. 17. [2] 1 Tim. 2. 4.
[3] Hebr. 10. 38. [4] John 6. 45. [5] 1 Thess. 2. 13.

Pagans had no divine faith. But, when they knew no better, they were infidels in only a negative sort of way. For "how shall they believe Him of whom they have not heard?"[1] But, if the falling short of faith comes from positive infidelity, that, though the word has come home, yea, resounds in every land unto the ends of the world, still the mind is determined to shut itself up against the light and to withhold assent, is resolved to go just so far as it sees with its two eyes, and beyond that only so far as reason can plod its way, then we come to Rationalism, which assumes the affectation of pronouncing that all supernatural faith, and supernatural motives of life are an unreality, a romanticism, an idealism, remote from plain, matter-of-fact men in this twentieth century.

This is the Third Degree of Mentality: "*Intelligo ne credam*, I understand, in order not to believe." To this shutting up of the intelligence, in resisting the known truth, there are attached some special perquisites, much prized by the worldly. If you will not understand aright, you need not pay the price of living aright. "*Noluit intelligere ut bene ageret*,"[2] He left off being wise for fear of having to do good; or, in other words, he would not understand, if he was to be handicapped with morality.

[1] Rom. 10. 14. [2] Ps. 35. 4.

Chapter XIV

MENTALITY: SOME MORE DEGREES

Benjamin. You introduced these degrees of Mentality, because I reported what a certain person said about Magdalen and good looks. You said, I was then in the latitude of the Fourth Degree.

St. Victor. That is "*Nec intelligo, nec credo,* I don't understand anything, and I don't believe anything." This degree may show itself in two varieties, the Unscientific and the Scientific. The unscientific, like that of your acquaintance in the matter of sanctity and good looks, consists merely in having a stock of catchwords and phrases to fling at you, as boys shoot pebbles or peas, and pass on.

Benjamin. Passing on! Just so! There seems to be no system about them, nor order in their minds.

St. Victor. "*Non ragioniam di lor, ma guarda e passa,*" Don't mind them, but, when you see them, pass on. This method of phrase-flinging and catchwords used to make a cheap use of Holy Scripture, as long as Holy Scripture had standing enough with certain people to attract their attention. Catchwords! You know what they are in life. Mr. Wyndham has told us of a discussion he had with a person who objected to religious teaching in schools, and wanted something else, signified by the catchwords, Civic and Social Virtues. Investigating the meaning of these phrases and the ingredients of that person's mentality, Mr. Wyndham elicited at length the information, that it was civic virtue not to spit in public places! What can you do with people who have only a pouch of pebbles ready to let fly at you?

The scientific variety is that of the prosers and the prophets; or rather of the prophets; for the Nonconformist minister, Dr. Horton, tells us that it is we Christians who are the prosers, or mere "scribes" of religion. The others have the prophets among them. He quotes with approval a remark of Schultze: "A religion which is growing has prophets; a religion completed has scribes." You see, religion with these persons is only a free field for adventure; for setting things up or knocking things down. They acquire the dignity of "prophets" by forecasting the trend of their future diversions. We who have received from Christ Our Lord His religion, delivered to us complete with all its deposit of truth for use throughout the centuries, we, our superiors, our doctors, actual and patristic, and the whole Church of Christ, must sit down on the lowly bench of "scribes," while the "prophets" go whirring over our heads, in a thinner atmosphere of adventure and discovery, and then come down to enlighten us with everything that has come into their heads. "Father," said a lunatic, "they call me crazy, because I say everything that comes into my mind. If you said everything that comes into your mind, they would call you crazy too!" There was sense in that, wasn't there?

But I see you want examples, to illustrate all this. In point of fact, this fourth degree of mentality runs so close, neck-and-neck, with the next, that we may just mass the illustrations all together, under the Fifth Degree, "*Credo, quia absurdum*, I believe, because the thing is absurd."

* * *

Benjamin. But can I be sure of my own mentality, in the midst of such a chaos?

ST. VICTOR. That is all right. Taking the word in a modern sense, you have no mentality.

BENJAMIN. I, none?

ST. VICTOR. Nor I, in the modern sense; nor St. Anselm; nor true philosophers generally. For all that we are doing is to cultivate the verdant soil of common sense; and such scientific culture is logic and philosophy. This is the work of an open mind; and there is no need of labelling that as a specific mentality. But, if you want a specimen to label so, let me quote one for you. Here is a writer who affirms that a man is a "bore," if he apprehends a truth, knows it, expresses it, and so arrives at some finality in research. His way of stating this remarkable theorem is that a man is a "bore," if he "does not discuss a subject with an air of adventure," leaving the field open for the fun of saying all kinds of things, or for the folly of fumbling through life, not knowing one's own mind, and delivering to others the outcome, or, as this writer calls it, the "adventures" of his brain. That is the sort of performance which the lunatic, as I mentioned, took to be his own specialty: "Father, they call me crazy, because I say everything that comes into my mind." If I rated St. Anselm's way of thinking as a degree of mentality, it was only to put him in line with the rest, and let you see the difference.

But do you want a Fifth Degree of Mentality? Here it is, conceived with a pragmatical emphasis: "*Credo, quia absurdum*, I believe, because the thing is absurd."

BENJAMIN. Who invented such a phrase?

ST. VICTOR. It was originally made up by some cynic as a sneer at our belief in God's power to work miracles, to suspend the order which He has instituted in nature, and to show that He is master in

His own house. But, infidel cynicism apart, we may apply the phrase in a literal and true sense.

* * *

Benjamin. What are the positive facts in the world of literature and thought betraying such a habit of mind, as "I believe, because the thing is absurd"?

St. Victor. Enough of literary and logical facts to furnish an extensive cabinet. To make Science a "Creed," as Herbert Spencer acknowledged it had become, is very absurd; and to accept that creed—to believe it because others have done so—is absurd in its subject, its object, its motive, and form of profession.

Scientifically speaking, it is absurd to say, you believe what you see. You believe one thing because you see another; or you believe what others have seen and tell you of. But you don't believe what you see yourself. Sight is not belief or faith.

To ridicule reason and logic is very absurd; to jumble ideas together in any way, putting round blocks in square holes; and, worse than that, to pronounce it the sign of a great mind, if you are utterly inconsistent; as Emerson said in all seriousness: "With consistency a great mind has nothing whatever to do!"

In like manner it is absurd to flout all art or "process" in learning the way of doing things. You are to practise religion without knowing what it is. You are to dispense learning in divine things, without having learned anything yourself, and to write on Religion by spinning it out of your brain. You are to be moral without observing laws; and Christian without knowing any rules. You are to love God without knowing anything about Him; but your love will make Him up for you.

It is absurd to make religion a "passion," and to get God by means of this "passion," which is to make Him up for you.

It is absurd to take intellectual faith as a thing which merely "happens" in the mind, "like a sunrise in the sky"; and, without seeing where religion comes from, or where it goes to, or what the thing is about, to have it "eager, clear and passionate."

It is absurd to profess as a fundamental belief that there must be no certainty of knowledge in anything which concerns the soul, God, time and eternity; and to add as a proper corollary that the Ten Commandments, which express the natural rules of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance, need revision in our times; and that Christian morality is a system of "pedantic impossible ethics"; and on top of that to make amends for the "impossibility" of being moral by writing rhapsodies on "Sweet Purity"! Is it not all very absurd? The inveterate habit of pinning one's faith to such ways of thinking, with their products unutterable in literature and life—all this belongs to the psychology of the Fifth Degree; *Credo, quia absurdum*, I believe, because the thing is absurd!

* * *

Benjamin. Are you speaking of any persons in particular? Are you quoting these things from definite sources?

St. Victor. Yes, from a legion. It is largely this kind of material that makes such a bloated thing of the literary world, year in and year out. Don't you know that of all the voluminous literature which pours out annually on Holy Scripture, nine-tenths of the productions have for their professed object or necessary result the total negation of the Divine

Word, and of all revelation? And do you think that, in the other fields of literature whether professedly religious or not, the general scope and trend of thought and of restless writing is not equally destructive of religion and its concomitant morality? But I see you want a specification of the charges, and not merely an indictment at large.

Here is a Modernist, who has been captured by a great organ of publicity to write on "Teaching Religion" in schools—one who is to be a guide of the blind, a light of them that are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, one supposed to have the form of knowledge and of truth in religion and Christianity.[1] In short, he is to teach teachers how to teach religion! He is a layman, not a divine. If it looks singular that such an oracle should be a layman this only shows what the great organ of publicity thinks of religion—that it has nothing more divine about it than any lay subject like art, the theatre, millinery;—and it shows what the organ knows of religion—that it is a thing which any one can write about, and there is no call for a specialist on divinity, though there is for one on millinery and the theatre.

First of all, he declares against knowing anything about religion with clearness and certainty. It must be a blind emotion, of something you have felt somehow; and on no account must it come within the reach of intelligent statement. He says: "The religious spirit is destroyed by certainty. Certainty is a corruption or perversion of it. It is an attempt to present religion in purely intellectual terms. Religion, as it exists in the mind of man, is an experience, mainly emotional, which cannot be expressed in purely intellectual terms." According to this,

[1] Rom. 2. 19, 20.

the intellectual mind is not to know clearly what religion is; much less to state it; but only to experience it as an emotion;—although, in point of fact, the mind has nothing to do with emotions, which are purely in the will and sensibilities. The mind deals with truth, not with feelings. Here the Modernist turns round, and says: "Religion is in its nature eager, clear, passionate and beautiful"—very clear indeed, if you don't know what the passionate thing is!

Then, having despatched all knowledge of religion, he despatches all knowledge of God, yes, and God Himself, who is the object of religion. He says: "There is one thing above all others then that religious teaching must avoid—namely, the assumption that it is wicked not to believe in God. So perhaps it is a mistake to begin religious teaching with any assertions about God."

But the Modernist has not despatched God, after all. He goes about making up a Divinity for Christianity. Listen to him: "Tell children that the faith is something which we have all to discover, in action and in thought; that Christianity is something which we have all to make"; and, when they have made out for themselves "that in the universe there is a power," then, "the more they obey and know and love, the more this power *becomes* to them a Person, *becomes* God."

He insists constantly on religion being "a passion," into which a man lashes himself, and so gets religion. Then the passion splutters out something which this Modernist calls "God," and it does this, says he, by "obeying and knowing and loving" the product of its excitement.

As against the irreligious, this Modernist mind actually makes an apology for religion. He asks,

what is God? He replies: Goodness, truth, beauty! which indeed are only "abstractions" to others, such as "moralists" and the like, but they are not abstractions to the "religious man," like the Modernist himself. For these three ideas of goodness, truth and beauty are "too intense to be expressed in any abstract words, and too completely one, to be expressed separately." "Hence [*comes*] the belief in God; which is the result of passionate values fused into one value—a result which happens to certain persons at least, just as naturally as the simple value for truth happens to others." If you do not understand this, you must know that those are irreligious minds which are only "possessed by the [*one*] simple value, truth"; whereas the religious are those possessed by the three values of goodness, truth and beauty. Hence he concludes triumphantly: "So those who are joyfully possessed by the value of truth," and are utterly irreligious, "have no right to sneer at the religious mind" and its three values, "or accuse it of any kind of dishonesty." There is the apology of this infidel for religion!

Everything only "happens." Nothing comes by intelligence, reason, system, or process. Says this Modernist: "Faith happens in the mind, like a sunrise in the sky." He says of belief: "It is something that happens to us like falling in love; and it does not happen because of any consequences that may follow from it."—The word "consequences" here means heaven, hell, and other such interesting things.

Benjamin. Is this man a lunatic—the one perhaps you mentioned before—that man who was crazy, because he said everything that came into his head?

St. Victor. If he is a lunatic, the more reason for

letting him have his say; for fear, as the Wise Man expresses it, the thing will "burst" him, or, like "an arrow sticking in his thigh," will make him dance until it comes out.[1]

He goes on: Faith imposes itself on a man, without any merit or demerit of his own: "Thus a man believes what his eyes tell him, because he trusts the evidence of his eyes. That is real belief, because it imposes itself upon him regardless of his wishes." Here this theorizer has lapsed into speaking of scientific knowledge, not of belief at all. He does not know the difference between science and faith. But he feels there is a great difference between you and himself, so he denounces you for it; and he proceeds to call you an atheist. He says: If any man believes deliberately as a means to an end, that is, as a thing he ought to do, a duty he is bound to fulfill towards God, then "we call him an atheist. For, if belief on any subject is belief, it cannot be a means to an end." That is, God has not any right to impose any duty of belief, as a means to reach Him, who is our last end.

So you have become an atheist now for believing God and His word. And he, the infidel, is the good religious man! Elsewhere, as I quoted before, you and I were pronounced to be "bores," for knowing anything definite, believing anything certain, and not discussing things in sport, "with an air of adventure."

There is much more of the same kind of thing. Are you satisfied? And do you see what it is all driving at?

* * *

Benjamin. But it is all out of my reach.

St. Victor. So it was out of mine. As I told you,

[1] Ecclus. 19. 10, 12.

we are in the region of the absurd—the Fifth Degree of Mentality: "*Credo, quia absurdum*, I believe, because the thing is absurd." However, *improbus labor omnia vincit*, by dint of sleight or of might you can get the best of everything; and so, by hard labor, one gets the better of the difficulty here, to understand something of what a Modernist can mean.

BENJAMIN. Well, what is he driving at?

ST. VICTOR. That is easy enough to see, when you strike the right angle of vision at last. He wants to get rid of free will, of ethics, morality, responsibility, of any judgment passed by the real God on a conscious and self-possessed creature. This Modernist says of the Ten Commandments, promulgated by God, "men must not content themselves with morals, or with the idea of pleasing Him by obeying His rules. God no more than the sun makes rules." As to anything like what the Christian understands by sin, the Modernist explains that respectable people have nothing special to do with sin: "People," says he, "are tired of being told that they ought not to commit the obvious disastrous sins; they know it already; and most of those who go to church do not commit them." Only murder or arson or Bolshevism is a sin for him!

But is there no such thing as sin? Oh, yes! There is "Collective Sin." And what is that? It is the "sinful state of mind" for which a disastrous war comes upon respectable people, who, for the rest, are not brawlers, not drunkards, nor open libertines.

BENJAMIN. But what is the "sinful state of mind"?

ST. VICTOR. Hard to say! Perhaps we can find out, by seeing what topics the Modernist prescribes for the preacher to talk about. The preacher, he says, should speak of sociology, and against extravagance, luxury, smartness. There is no mention of

bringing the Commandments of God home; nor of ever alluding to the Sixth Commandment. Mr. Shane Leslie has told us that such had been his experience at a great public school, where he was brought up. The preachers never alluded to that subject with the boys, who were too respectable and too aristocratic to be admonished on a topic like purity.

Another writer denies flatly that we have any "legal relation" to God. Another sneers at the idea of "school-book ethics." So you reach by this road the very quintessence of paganism, minus its idols of wood and stone, "*le paganisme moins ses dieux.*" You reach farther than the old paganism, because you have not its excuse. It sighed for the very morality, which the Modernist and the Sceptic slough off so cheerily to have their fling; and it called for the very processes of religious life, which these men will not hear of. Thus Seneca says of an ascetic meditation on one's own life: "This is why we are badly off indeed, because no one looks back upon his life. What we are to do we think of, though seldom enough. What we have done we don't think of at all."

Finally, this Modernism sinks virtue and sanctity, merit and demerit, judgment, hell and heaven, in one comprehensive negation, as formulated by the biological theory of Evolution, which denies all. It says: "There is this great value in the biological conception of life, that it has freed us from taboos and cruel mysteries; and has convinced us that virtue is not something arbitrary and unnatural." God is only a "leader of men, and his purposes are man's purposes"; whence it follows that sin consists "in thwarting His and man's purposes, and not in doing what He arbitrarily forbids," by His Commandments.

That is what the Modernistic creed comes to, having begun by making religion a sentiment, an emotion, a feeling. It has nothing left, neither morality, nor doctrine, nor positive information of any kind to give. It treats you to sport, adventure, to something that breaks loose from everything. Religion "being a passion," says the Modernistic oracle, "the greatest of all passions—or it is nothing—it cannot express itself in jargon, or in merely moral sayings, or in dry statements of doctrine. It is not itself merely moral, nor merely intellectual, nor merely aesthetic; but it is all three in fusion. And the clergyman does not know all about it any more than the layman."

Now there you have some few samples of Mentality in its Fifth Degree: "I believe, because the thing is absurd." And these I have given you from only one line of fancy or fiction in the intellectual world and its literary activities—well paid for, because it is what people want. Publishers know their public; which, in the case of this last Modernistic dogmatist just quoted, was the pedagogic public, chiefly teachers in elementary schools.

BENJAMIN. But do they consider this a scientific mentality?

ST. VICTOR. They don't consider it an absurd one.

BENJAMIN. Then what?

ST. VICTOR. Why, a Modernistic one; and original withal, for the reason which *Punch* gave to prove that Herbert Spencer was an original thinker: "He thought he was!" That was an original thought, wasn't it?

* * *

BENJAMIN. Let us get out into the fresh air!

ST. VICTOR. But, if you want to make acquaintance with the Sixth Degree of Mentality, I am

afraid the manner of your exit will be very different from that of your entrance into the subject. You remember coming into these Mentalities by a Saint, Anselm. Do you wish to go out by the devil, Satan?

BENJAMIN. What do you mean?

ST. VICTOR. The last degree of mentality is: "The devils believe and tremble."[1]

BENJAMIN. Well, at least, that is not stupid like the preceding one.

ST. VICTOR. No! Devils are not stupid. They know something. Every one gives them credit for that. They know and tremble. But the things we have just been considering are stupid, because they are self-contradictory; and the people who perpetrate them are very assiduous in contradicting one another, and jostling one another; and are proud of it all, as they go slouching and lurching along. Theorizers of that kind are always eating up one another's theories; as St. Paul said of the Galatians, biting, devouring and consuming one another.[2] They are always eating themselves up, as the same Apostle says: "Their word doth eat as a gangrene";[3] or, as Dryden says,

> Creates a crawling brood
> And turns to maggots what was meant for food.

Any quantity of such mentalities does not contain a grain of the sense, capacity and philosophy to be found in a single page of the Schoolmen, among whom St. Anselm was a distinguished figure, and, indeed, a progenitor, a patriarch.—But do you want a touch of this last degree, which moderns would call "mystic." It is as I said: "The devils believe and tremble."

* * *

[1] James 2. 19. [2] Gal. 5. 15. [3] 2 Tim. 2. 17.

Benjamin. Surely people don't tremble nowadays. You quoted some respectable person a moment ago to the effect, that he and other such respectable people don't commit sins for preachers to rail against. You said they were sociological instead.

St. Victor. Don't they tremble? Then why are they at Religion and Theology all the time? To mention the English-speaking world which is not very religious, the output of publications on religion and theology every year distances all other branches of literary activity and thought, except only the department of fiction. I have observed for different years about 800 new books annually in America on theology and religion, against 1000 to 1400 books of fiction; while all the other branches of publication fall below these figures. Similarly in England for a series of years, there was an average of about 800 books on religion and theology, against 1600 to 2300 books of fiction. If people will not deal with true religion, they will dabble with it under the form of superstition; as one designer of a charm intimates, when he tells us that in the first year of the great war he sold 1,250,000 of his talismans called "Touchwood." People are very sensitive about their personal integrity and their skins: "*Pellem pro pelle!* Skin for skin, and all that a man hath he will give for his life."[1] When, for reasons best known to themselves, they keep clear of the true religion, they go floundering into superstition—if so, to save their skin! How many of them go shivering, and resemble

> Her, who laughs at Hell, but (like her Grace)
> Cries, "Ah, how charming, if there's no such place!"

They don't tremble, you suggest! Then why all the

[1] Job 2. 4.

disquietude and restlessness, which I have partly described above, but that each one

> Bears about
> A silent court of justice in his breast,
> Himself the judge and jury, and himself
> The prisoner at the bar, ever condemn'd.

There were ages of faith when, as Father Curci says of the Prodigal Son, men sinned stoutly, but then they knew how to repent and do penance stoutly. Now without character, backbone or vitality, your "downy doctors," as Young called them, go about setting up downy cushions for every sin, and suggesting soft palliatives for feeble minds, that after all God only "happens" in the mind, as a sunset "happens" in the sky; and that God makes no rules, nor gives any Commandments, any more than the sun gives rules; and, in any case, that, as a Harvard professor lately propounded, the Ten Commandments "need revision" and a new edition, which will take all the sin and all the sting out of them. This is coming back to the eighteenth century proposal, when, as a cynical person wrote in 1723, a bill was being drafted for Parliament, to have the word "not" taken out of the Commandments, and put into the Creed: and then they would read respectively: "Thou shalt have false gods before me"! and "I believe not in God Almighty"! It all agrees with what you quoted from the lady-writer in the weekly periodical: "We who have outgrown Christianity," quoth she!

Meanwhile, there are qualms of conscience notwithstanding, and the nervous things

> Compound for sins they are inclined to
> By damning those they have no mind to.

Repentance is out of the question, even when there is some stoppage in the life of sin, for

> While my former flames remain within,
> Repentance is but want of power to sin.

And, if it is only respectability or human respect which puts a bar to indulgence, the spirit baulked

> Murmurs at the curse
> And incapacity of being worse.

As even the pagan Juvenal signified in the passage which I quoted for you, the man who only keeps the sin within from going out has the full guilt of the sin outside and inside: Who is guilty in thought, he said, has the guilt of the deed. There is ever on him

> That eye which watches guilt
> And goodness, and hath power to see
> Within the green the moulder'd tree.

Some one, I know, spoke of this mould and canker and dry-rot as "the great heart of humanity" palpitating; and, suiting the action to the idea and the doctrine, fell back recumbent on that "great heart" by the indulgence of open passion and of public vice. Others call this same thing "nature" and her wants. But

> Is conscience then
> No part of nature? Is she not supreme,
> Thou regicide?

Has God no part in nature, but He must be only something "happening like a sunrise" and setting with the sun, leaving man to his darkness, his respectability, and deeds without a name?

> What nature wants (a phrase I much distrust)
> Extends to luxury, extends to lust.

Let us leave him, for he will not be healed:[1]

> With all his conscience and one eye askew—
> So false, he partly took himself for true.

* * *

Benjamin. But so many of these persons write nicely, suavely, blandly. Others that one knows are so smooth and velvety and prim. You can't imagine such pinks of fashion to be trembling, shivering, shuddering, like the demons.

St. Victor. Here is one in an Essay on Immortality assailing hell on all the proper grounds of utilitarianism, humanitarianism, and, as he says, "decent human morality," which will not admit such a "loathsome" notion as that of hell being the wages for sin,[2] or such an improper notion as that of nice people being paid their wages. But, if they don't fear, what are they writing for, and swelling their heap of literature with what they call Religion and Theology? It is not for professional motives; since many of them are lay people. It must be either for the love of God's attributes, and that is out of the question; or fear of God's justice, and that is quite germane to the question. The Italians say, "Where the tooth aches there the tongue licks."

Benjamin. There might be other motives besides love or fear.

St. Victor. None others are to be found. For all the motives you can possibly find or invent come back to two, and two only, going forward to and coming back from, loving something or fearing something. There is no love here; for "he who loves Me keeps My Commandments." And these people will have it that there are no Commandments; that God no more makes laws "than the sun makes rules";

[1] Jerem. 51. 9. [2] Rom. 6. 23.

or they flout the laws of God as "arbitrary" and nothing worth. So, since there is no love in the case, you will find only that fear which Satan denoted: "*Pellem pro pelle*, Skin for skin."[1]

BENJAMIN. Well, they make life very comfortable for themselves, and bright.

ST. VICTOR.

> As hags hold sabbaths, less for joy than spite,
> So these their merry, miserable night.

BENJAMIN. We may leave it at this, that they don't quite understand.

ST. VICTOR. Yes, we may leave it at that. But St. Paul put it more plainly: "They did not like to have God in their knowledge."[2] Moses expressed it more emphatically: "They did not think to understand."[3] Our Lord, using the language of Moses, spoke of an "unbelieving and perverse generation."[4] On a former occasion you encountered a kind of mentality which neither understood nor believed anything. Now you come back to it under another form, that it does not even know in order to understand: "*Nescierunt neque intellexerunt*, They have not known nor understood, they walk in darkness."[5]

Don't imagine that people are indifferent to eternity, or to the fate of that living freight which has been consigned to their care in time—their own souls, themselves. They do indeed flaunt the flag of "Indifferentism"; and some pretend to fly into a vain-glorious passion over it; and many of them make others feel their passion, and pay for it. But they are only bragging: "They that hate Thee have been boasting in the midst of Thy solemnity; they have set up their ensigns for signs." The psalmist

[1] Job 2. 4. [2] Rom. 1. 28. [3] Deut. (LXX), 32. 29.
[4] Deut. (LXX), 32. 5, 20. Matt. 17. 16. Luke 9. 41. [5] Ps. 81. 5.

winds up the tumult of the drama by saying: "The pride of them that hate Thee ascendeth continually."[1] It all comes back, however, to the state of mystic mentality noted by St. James: "The demons believe and tremble."

BENJAMIN. But will you explain now what Faith and Religion are?

ST. VICTOR. We have done so already, though chiefly in a negative way, just as the child explained what its memory was: "What is Memory?" Answer: "It is the thing we forget with." We have seen that religion is something which a multitude of people are trying to do away with. That is because you have led me about, bringing me up to all sorts of angles and corners and questionable company.

BENJAMIN. Well, if we have flitted, I don't regret it, for I have been chasing the fleeting lights and shades of thought. But is it not time now to say more fully what Faith and Religion are?

ST. VICTOR. No time now—another time!

[1] Ps. 73. 4, 23.

RELIGION

Chapter XV

THE QUESTION

St. Victor. If we are to know the connection between Religion and so many other things which you touch on, please say distinctly what you mean by Religion.

Benjamin. It is said in *The Grammar of Assent* that religion is "the knowledge of God, of His will, and of our duties towards Him."

St. Victor. That is religion taken only as a doctrine, which is an acquirement and adornment of the mind. What about religion in the heart? It is notorious that many persons who, in the course of centuries, have been highly qualified as masters of doctrine—yes, and of sound doctrine too—have been anything but religious persons in action and in life. Religion is not merely a sound way of thinking; it is also a right way of acting, as we signify more precisely when we speak of a person's "religiousness." All your doctrine, with your thinking and knowing and teaching people the facts, causes and effects of a man's life, will never take him anywhere except to the bar of a severer judgment worthy of the facts, if he does not produce effects worthy of such causes. He would be an idle theorizer. But we do not want speculation just now—that which makes a mind. We want religion, that which makes a man. So I return to the query: What is religion as a moral virtue of life, and not as an abstract, intellectual habit of thought?

BENJAMIN. You mean the service of God?

ST. VICTOR. That is a usual meaning of religion, and is an effect of it. Still, as a specific virtue, religion is not so wide as all its effects and results. The service of God, as you may observe, means all the virtues together in co-operation; and to serve Him as He deserves, with such capacities as are ours, is scarcely reached by the divinest of human lives in the short span of time which is ours. It is on this shore of God's service that all the surging powers and energies of human effort and angelic bliss break their swelling waves, as Our Lord's words implied, when He placed the fulfilment of creation in the accomplishment of this comprehensive duty —to serve God by doing God's will, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Now we need something more specific to define religion strictly. It is a moral virtue, because it shapes our ways and acts towards God, so much so that you suggested the service of God as the idea of religion. It is not first among all virtues which adorn the human heart. For it is preceded by the sublime ones of Faith, Hope and Charity, which, having God for their direct object, are called in a special sense divine or "theological." Religion comes next; because, though it does not take God for its direct object, it takes the Worship of God. Therefore it comes first among all the other virtues which are called "moral," since they shape our "*mores*," that is, our free acts, manners, ways and character, in the conduct of ourselves and in the management of other things.

BENJAMIN. Then religion is simply the virtue which has God's honour and worship for its object.

ST. VICTOR. And so gives God His due. In similar terms, what is Faith? For faith, you see, is the first

among the divine or theological virtues, just as religion is first among the simply moral virtues.

* * *

BENJAMIN. In similar terms, Faith gives God His due in the matter of believing Him when He speaks. The theology of the penny catechism has it, that "Faith is a supernatural gift of God, which enables us to believe without doubting whatever God has revealed."

ST. VICTOR. Big words! "Revelation" and the "Supernatural"! Faith then is beyond the reach of nature—supernatural! How can you ever be held to it?

BENJAMIN. Because it is put in your hands, and you are to hold it. It is a gift.

ST. VICTOR. But is God bound to give it?

BENJAMIN. Clearly, if He enjoins it on you to receive it.

ST. VICTOR. In other words, it is like the robe at the wedding-feast. The robe is necessary; but it lies at the portals of the banqueting-hall for the person to take up and put on. Without that wedding-garment no one, said Our Lord, was to enter. If he did, it was at his peril.

BENJAMIN. Then they were all free to stay away!

ST. VICTOR. No, they were not! They were compelled to come in from the highways and the hedges: *Compelle intrare!* Put them under the necessity to come in, for, if there is anything they want in time and eternity, it is here they must get it! It is the will and law of God that all shall come in, for all answer the description of being poor and feeble and blind and lame. But they are not to appear in their rags; or they shall be expelled into the outer darkness for their presumption and insolence.[1] So He has

[1] Luke 14. 21–23; Matt. 22. 12, 13.

placed at the door the supernatural gifts of faith, and of all other graces; faith itself being the first gift of grace. He willeth all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth;[1] that is, to know their place, to accept what He conveys if they want to be accepted, and to do God the common justice of believing what He says. Accepting Truth on God's Word, that is Faith. When God speaks, it is no wonder that every one is required to be there and report. Without faith, says St. Paul, it is impossible to please God; for the just man liveth by faith.[2] Observe, he is dead without it! And God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. If a man have not divine faith he is not yet alive in the sight of God's supernatural providence.

Now, as to the contents of the divine message which is accepted by faith, you said that it is whatever God has revealed. How wide that object is, you may see by looking at the Divinity, and at creatures in all possible relations to the Divine Nature. With Cajetan you may run down a declension of cases: *Deus*, the object of faith may be Himself; *Dei*, Of Him, anything that is His; *Deo*, To Him, anything that is brought back or referred to Him; *Deum*, Himself as the term of movement, anything that gravitates towards Him; *a Deo*, By Him, anything that comes from Him. So an object of faith may be formulated in every aspect of God and of things relating to Him, if He chooses to convey it and pass the word on to us.

Then, as the generations come following one another, He brings His revelation to the different relays of humanity arriving, by means of a permanent messenger that is in waiting, an Institution of His own that abides through the generations. By

[1] 1 Tim. 2. 4. [2] Heb. 10. 38; 11. 6

the law of physical vitality the world is ever replenished with new waves of humanity rolling in and rolling over the face of the earth; and at the same time the Sun of Justice is there to illumine all with that Light of the World which cannot be hid. His truth is brought to us by His Church to which He said, "You are the light of the World"; and "Go ye and teach all nations!" [1] Whatever the Church believes and teaches, that is the Word of God accredited by Himself. And here you have the Rule of Faith.

There are the terms and our explanation of them, Religion and Faith. Now what have you to say about them?

* * *

BENJAMIN. A well-known writer, Mr. Chesterton, says this of disputable propositions, that to establish them as true you take your choice among three ways. The first way is that of proclaiming the truth of the matter with authority, as priests and parents do.

ST. VICTOR. Of course, no matter of faith is a disputable proposition, from the moment it is delivered by the competent authority as the Word of God. There is nothing to dispute about then.

BENJAMIN. The same author went on to say, that the second way of presenting disputable propositions was to go about proving them by reason. But that, he observed, is out of date, being only the scholastic way of mediæval schoolmen, and of some other men of science who are now forgotten.

ST. VICTOR. Proving them by reason! Very good! Not merely fastening on some ill-fitting text to pass off any condemned error, or, as the poet has it,

[1] Matt. 5. 14; 28. 19

> In religion
> What damned error but some sober brow
> Will bless it, and approve it with a text,
> Hiding the grossness with fair ornament!

Proving by reason! There you have the whole field of divine science or theology; which operates about the subject matter of faith so as to establish it also by reason, or, if you cannot do that in high mysteries like the Trinity, to show that they are not against reason. So nothing escapes that comprehensive science of theology, whether it be, as I told you a moment ago from Cajetan, *Deus Ipse*, or *Dei*, or *Deo*, or *ad Deum*, or *a Deo*. To this declension of cases you must add all the tenses and moods of things, as they were, are and shall be, as they may or can be, as they proceed positively or potentially from Him, and you see how all things great and small, being referred to God, are comprised under one divine science which embraces all. "For of Him, and by Him, and in Him are all things; to Him be glory for ever!"[1] There is finality then in knowing what's what—not the fluctuation of never knowing anything, "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth," doubting and wavering "like the surge of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed."[2] "Profane babblings!" says St. Paul, contradictions of a gnosticism or "knowledge falsely so called."[3]

Benjamin. The third way of establishing dubious propositions is, says that same author, to take everything for granted, to treat it as already proved by other people, and to dismiss any other view of the matter as an obsolete error.

St. Victor. That is very good! However, instead of the term "obsolete error" for every unpleasant

[1] Rom. 11. 36. [2] 2 Tim. 3. 7; James 1, 6. [3] 1 Tim. 6. 20.

truth, the fashionable phrases to-day are more velvety, and kid-glove-like. They are such as these: "Not in accordance with modern thought," "Not in keeping with the advance of science," "Not conformable to the theory of Evolution," "Subject to reservations," and so on with the rest of the vocabulary, all in the sense of pushing off, shoving off and explaining nothing. You will find that the people who take this short cut of studied ignorance to evade a truth do not pretend to explain or prove what they mean. It is itself a way of proving things, but by pretermission, that is, passing over the proofs with a lofty air of self-satisfied sufficiency which you are supposed to appreciate; and it pays you the implied compliment that you are too well-bred to call for a vulgar demonstration, which would smack of "scholasticism," or "logic," or something of that kind. It is in this way that a fictitious credit is made up for assumptions. People's

> Own dreams at length deceive 'em
> And, oft repeating, they believe 'em.

And again

> Caught by your own delusive art,
> You fancy first, and then assert.

You have a notorious sample of inflated credit in the way Evolution is made to float through the world. Of a more idealistic turn is Modernism. That is set afloat in much the same way.

* * *

Benjamin. How do you face the situation of dubious propositions being passed as truth on the strength of truth being passed over as an "obsolete error"?

St. Victor. Turn on the light and let it shine. It will penetrate and wither up what only breeds in the shadow, in the covert of the reed, and in moist places. There are always people who are honest, and are feeling their way out from the obscurity, especially when their faith and Christianity were only stolen from them once by sleight of hand. If you want an apology for letting your light shine, you have Our Lord's behest; or you may adopt the justification of the early Wesleyan preacher who, being reprimanded by the Anglican bishop for preaching too much, yea at all times, replied that really he preached only two times, to wit, "in season and out of season."

However, when you feel stirred on seeing what St. Paul calls a cancer creeping, and you find that apparently you can do so little, it is important to understand the realities of the case and to see your own possibilities in due proportion. First, observe that the receptive public is not with you, nor for you; then that the organs of publicity are for the public, and not for the truth; further, that the public want you every new day, or at least every new week and month, to bring some new thing, not the "platitudes" of old truth; and that any sacred cult of error which commends itself to fashion or passion will never want proselytes, nor men of talent to serve it, as long as the occupation of promoting the cult remains profitable or comfortable. The other day a great paper, which panders to Modernistic infidelity week after week, shook off some criticism disdainfully by saying: "As if we did not know our public!" Elsewhere it was said: People are tired of hearing the "old platitudes" of the Gospel given out from the pulpit week after week.

Benjamin. This does not seem a very enlivening

occupation, to sit by the way and contemplate a herd driving and driven the wrong way.

St. Victor. The psychology of the thing, Benjamin! See the method of the game, and the force of terms! Any rag used to be good enough for the children to tie round their eyes when they played Blind Man's Buff, and then went bumping into everything and everybody. So it is conceived that any rag of a pretext, or of a phrase, is good enough to make the truth feel uncomfortable and frighten her away. It was thus that the old pagan Mnasalcas described Virtue as discredited and derelict: "Here I sit, poor Virtue, shorn of my locks and woe-begone, for vile Pleasure there has the best of it with every one." That too was the way the old adage portrayed the fate of the pitcher: "Toss the stone on the pitcher, and woe to the pitcher! Toss the pitcher on the stone, and woe to the pitcher all the same!" It is like the sport they had with the negro in Arkansas, who was charged with having stolen the colonel's corkscrew. The crowd seized him, and set about lynching him, when just then the colonel found the corkscrew in his hip pocket. Thereupon the negro was brought before the magistrate, who found the case so clear that he dispensed with further evidence; and he sentenced the negro to "one hundred days' hard labour," observing: "This tendency to riot must be stopped"!

Facts can be twisted to serve any verdict or theory, just as we have seen Darwin's observations of nature used to bring in a stupendous theory of Evolution, which left out the Author of nature. Then a Herbert Spencer came expressly to work Evolution into positive irreligion, by making out of it Agnosticism, or the professional ignorance of any such Person as God.

* * *

Benjamin. Studied ignorance should not be charged, I presume, on our enlightened days.

St. Victor. Of course not! any more than the ignorance which never defines what it is talking about, and never explains its terms. You should have added this as a fourth way of passing off disputable propositions, that of never saying and not knowing what precisely they mean. And so you come to what is called now the "symbolism" of Sacred Scripture; that everything is symbolic there; it conveys, they say, "an ancient and symbolic" story; it is "mythical," "romantic"; the Christianity prevalent so far is "historic" in the sense of being founded on this "story," ancient and symbolic. Meanwhile, says Modernism, if religion is alive, everything must go shifting in it; and the Infinite, it affirms, is positively honoured when you affirm contradictories about it; and your science about things is live and energetic when it is contradicting itself right and left. In fact, it has been said repeatedly, that it is a true mark of genius to be inconsistent and self-contradictory, warring with oneself. The Wise man speaks of "the great war of ignorance,"[1] which has of course its privileges and immunities. For there is nothing you cannot be or cannot do if you are ignorant enough. You can break all the commandments of nature, God, and man. Hence Socrates considered that all sin and crime was only an ignorance. You see where the charm lies of developing it into a cult, and getting rid of a Personal God. Only that then it has ceased to be ignorance. And, not only the Agnosticism which ignores a Personal God, but the "romanticism" and "mysticism," which elaborately set up sentiment and emo-

[1] Wisd. 14. 22.

tion as the whole of religion, are a fine art developed for throwing dust in the eyes of all and sundry.

It is not to be denied that there are more kinds than one of mysticism. There is that of the dazzling light in which the Divinity lives, and in which our intelligence is dazed and blinded as in a dark night. There is the mysticism of sin and hell, where the "eye is stopped up," like Balaam's,[1] but not by the light of God. However, the religion which belongs to practical life, as a doctrine and a virtue, cannot be called "mysticism," except for a purpose which is not disguised, that of enveloping Christianity in a cloud of verbiage which comprises also paganism, Mahomedanism, Buddhism, fetichism. For, in all these, the fashion is to talk of "mystics." The terms, "mysticism," "sentimentalism," "emotionalism," serve as a common denominator for all these exhibitions of religious feeling. And Christianity, being wrapped up with them, disappears as a mere item to be discarded with the rest of the bundle.

[1] Numb. 24. 3.

Chapter XVI

SENTIMENT

Benjamin. You said religion was a science and an art; that is, a doctrine and a virtue, a way of thinking and a way of living. But doctrine is dry. Art is equally so. What has become of sentiment, which you seem to run down? Where is the feeling which we associate with religion? Where the devotion?

St. Victor. The driest virtue, which conveys no suggestion of a sentiment, can still be devout, and perfectly so. For substantially devotion consists in attaching the mind and heart to God.[1] Substantive virtue consists precisely in cleaving to God, and doing so in all weathers, however high may be the cost of doing without the comfort of accidentals. These can always be added as supplements, in the same way as Caleb answered the complaint of his daughter, who said on her marriage day that he had given her only a southern and dry land; whereupon he gave her the upper and the nether watery ground.[2] Spiritual writers have seen in this incident a picture of sentiment and its well-springs being added to solid devotion. Indeed, the degree of a soul's attachment to God may be intense, and yet be without any consciousness of feeling. It does not depend upon any flowering of sentiment, nor on the south wind which blows perfumes through the garden of the soul, and makes the aromatical spices flow.

These sentimental or emotional phases depend

[1] Ps. 72. 28. [2] Josue 15. 19.

upon contingent factors of times and seasons, as most religious persons experience at the recurrence of great festivals. They depend upon personal elements, as of a lively susceptibility. The fine toning of the soul may be so responsive, that, as I think St. Teresa said of her own expansive sentiment, any one could purchase her affections with a fig. This shows how there are limiting factors, such as a cold and reasoning temperament, or the pinched-up condition of a critical mind, or the timorous shrinking of a scrupulous heart. Then there are always those wasting factors of imperfect or bad habits, which use up and abuse the beautiful sentimentality of the human heart, or at least neutralize it, making it dull to the inspirations of high truth, sodden to the impressions of lofty virtue, and responsive only to the commonest calls of sense and practical life.

* * *

Benjamin. Well, we covet fruits, and don't want all roots.

St. Victor. Possibly some people want fruits whether there are roots or not—like the cut flowers which will be dead to-morrow morning.

Benjamin. We ought to be human, and not philosophers, to freeze and be frozen, becoming not merely inhuman but possibly inhumane. Even faith, which you perch so high, glistering so cold, has a sentiment in it. We never believe unless there is a wish to believe. There is sentiment at the very root of faith divine.

St. Victor. I do not see why a wish should be called a sentiment, or need be accompanied by a sentiment, at least of the pleasurable kind. A woman may wish many things for her son or husband in the matter of education or promotion, and yet her

heart-strings may be twitched at the prospect of having in consequence to do without his presence at home. If a person wishes to do his duty, to know the true faith, and knowing it to accept it, and meanwhile foresees that in accepting the Word of God he has to forfeit his prestige in the world, resign his position, his income, maintenance for himself, for his wife and family, and, notwithstanding all this, he still persists in following the dominant attraction of divine grace, which has filled heaven with martyrs from the arena of tears and blood, I doubt whether there is much glow of sentiment in the contemplation of all that! "I have only eleven objections more," said one who was on the verge of entering the Church — "I mean my wife and ten children!"

BENJAMIN. How sad! Yet God who gives the mouths gives the bread.

ST. VICTOR. Yes, but along with the judgment and sentence which such lofty devotion passes on the world, there can scarcely be much overflow of sentiment to make the sacrifice pleasant—the sacrifice of going forth and becoming an exile and a stranger, leaving the cozy corner of friends and acquaintance, and passing out into God's wide, wide world! You may have noticed how the cool resignation and cold determination of Christians in resigning all they had, and life itself, has been quite an element in the history of persecution; it has been a constant irritant to persecutors and robbers. Idolaters and infidels have winced before their victim: "He hath become the censurer of our thoughts," said they; "Let us examine him by outrages and tortures."[1] During 300 years at the beginning, almost all over the world at one time or

[1] Wisd. 2. 14, 19.

other till our own day, Christians of either sex and of any age were liable to be snatched without notice from their houses, their table, their couch, and be put on a rack, or consigned to the mercies of a slow fire.

This is the feast of St. Francis de Sales. Take an instance from him of what is meant by the purest substantial devotion, unrelieved by any gleam of comfort from time or eternity. While engaged in his studies as a young man, he was overcome by scruples and fears that he would never reach a place among the elect and save his soul. After a long siege of utter desolation he prostrated himself before the Blessed Sacrament and prayed that, if he was not destined to love God in eternity, at least he might have the grace of loving his Creator in time. On the instant, the clouds which had darkened his mind were lifted, and the calm of divine grace succeeded to the agitation of his soul. There was an act of heroic devotion! but where? In what that same Saint was wont to call "the fine point of the spirit"; whence God's sky indeed may be seen clear and blue, but the frame is shivering, the desolate soul is suspended betwixt heaven and earth, and the chief mainstay of substantial devotion is the figure of the Martyr of Martyrs hanging derelict on the Cross and faithful unto death.

* * *

Benjamin. Yes, but there must have been a vivid appreciation of things divine to give nerve for what you describe. Now such a realization of assent to God's Word, belief in His promises, and intensity of adhesion to Him, strong enough to bear the soul into such a flood of woes, and through them, and victoriously beyond them—what is all this but a

source of joy and comfort, and therefore of sentiment, which heals while it bleeds?

St. Victor. That kind of agony is rather of the sort which bleeds whether it heals or not. Or the soul freezes while it contemplates the clear blue sky of God's will. The intensity of devotion here is not any intensity of emotion; it has nothing to do with natural sentiment gushing forth. Everything is against that. For our sentiment and emotion, or that which in an advanced degree is called passion, must have an object cognate to it, one which calls the feeling out, fans it, keeps it alive, if by nothing else, at least by the memory of its kindred object. *Jesu, dulcis memoria!* Jesus, sweet is the memory of Thee! But, in what I have described, there is nothing cognate to any feeling or passion, except that of fright and horror.

Benjamin. How does that agree with the conscious intensity of cleaving to God who is good and sweet?

St. Victor. Because the object of substantial devotion is not the sweetness of God, but the God of sweetness, which attribute of His remains in reserve to solicit and engage, not substantial, but tender devotion—your sentiments, emotions and feelings. Then you speak of the devout soul being consciously intense in cleaving to God. I do not think that devotion, to be true and substantial, need be conscious at all of how intense it is.

What do you mean by intensity? Something that you screw your imagination up to, straining it to conjure up feelings in the emotional nature? No! Intensity is only a mature fulness of the powers operating in their full strength. I do not believe that a strong man, lifting up a hundredweight with ease, is more conscious of the intensity required and ex-

pended than the wee little boy that lifts up his hobby-horse and puts it on a chair.

Intensity is merely fulness of effort, such as the peach or the rose shows you under a July sun. There is not a cellule or fibre in one or other which is not intense in its activity, reacting to the glorious sunshine. Yet you do not see any straining in them. From the heights at the back of Vallombrosa look over the valley to Alvernia on a midsummer day. All the mass of vegetation, herbage, vines, olives, every little twig and shoot on the banks of the Arno is intense from the moment when the sun peeps over the side of the mountain at Alvernia, till he goes down ever so late at night-fall into the shades of the hills about Vallombrosa. On his long journey during that stretch of hours, it is astounding what an amount of work the sun has had to do in all the paradise of life before you, where every tiniest cell has leaped out to him in a riot of luxurious growth. Leaped, do I say, and rioted? No, not one! All has been intensely quiet, and quietly intense. The only disturbance was some light breeze which stirred the foliage, just as temptations ruffle the surface of the soul. But such alien elements are intruders which we do not take the trouble to recommend for expulsion, since they too have their work to do, in changing the air and freshening things up a little.

Benjamin. I see you are referring to the picture of the sun in his tabernacle, or of Him who put His tabernacle in the sun, and came forth as a bridegroom from His bridechamber, rejoicing as a giant to run His way. His going out is from the end of heaven, and His circuit even to the other end; and there is no one that can hide himself from the heat.

St. Victor. I am rather alluding to the character of that intensity which His beneficence calls forth,

when no one escapes from His goodness, and no heart can hide from the warmth of His grace. Look at the intensity of fervour, and at the same time the intense quietude as depicted in the person of St. Clare at Assisi. The perfect stillness of her features is just suspended for a moment by the eyes half-opening, evidently for some affair of this nether world which has summoned her attention from the audience proceeding in that great soul within. The Holy Ghost is entertaining her there with His converse. The eyes will close again in another moment, and all be as still again as the pallid cheek and tapering fingers—motionless, not in death, but in the ecstasy of contemplative life.

Benjamin. I see intensity may be very quiet. But your picture of the sun shows how warm it is.

St. Victor. And how cold it may be. For intensity is the fulness of vital energy. Now in the appreciation of artists you see it associated with even the coldest marble. Thus Michael Angelo, having finished his great statue of Moses, is said to have struck it, saying "Now speak!" And they say of St. Bruno, whose colossal statue in marble at the Baths of Diocletian represents him as so quiet, pensive and prayerful, that, were it not for his rule of silence, he would speak to you from that niche. Does not this imply that the conception of full and intense life may be conjoined with the conception of intense cold? Yea, I can contemplate the cold sepulchre, in which no man had been laid till the Lord was placed there, and I can see in it an apt figure of many a chosen soul, pure, undefiled, intense and cold!

* * *

Benjamin. Well, you do succeed in giving one a chill of devotion!

St. Victor. I don't say that devotion is cold. I only say it may be. But, if you want a recipe for keeping devotion down at a low temperature, or at no temperature at all above zero, I can easily show you how. Bargain with God, huckster with Him, lay down conditions, give Him line intending to draw in and draw back at any moment which will suit your convenience, count every sprat of a bait you throw out to see how much you can haul in of His goodness, sweetness, liberality, keep your eye always on the main chance of trusting no one, not even God, and I can assure for you perpetual refrigeration in the life of the spirit. For you see there are two ways of going about things. There is the half-and-half, and there is the thing entire. There is the conditioned and the unconditional. There is the self-abandonment of him that shall lose his life and therefore find it, and again of him who just lends something of himself—always with the reserve of coddling himself when and where he may.

Here I read at this moment, in the account of a certain industry, that "there are two broad principles which govern the design" to be followed, "either," says the writer, "to aim at an excellence irrespective of cost, or to aim at a low price with less regard to finish." There you have the distinction which differentiates the devout. Some with self-abandonment throw themselves into the hands of God, howsoever they may have to pass through heat or cold, through fire or water, in reaching the Object of their love. Others barter, bargain, huckster, and are good in their way; but there is an end of it. You cannot expect that all the best fruits of devotion, the old and the new, drop into their mouths. Yet even these, if sensitive characters, may be warm-hearted, and glow with sensibility,

and gush with a devotion which is all accidental. It runs short of that other substantial article which we have been considering, and which, being the substance of spirituality, is so with intensity.

Benjamin. Then what does it all come to but that the substantially devout may or may not have tender devotion; and that the unsubstantially devout may be warm-hearted or may not be?

St. Victor. Precisely, that all this matter is in the order of the accidental, that it may come or go, be there or not, and make no change in the substance, which is adhesion to God's will; "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." And in this there is always substantial comfort, because it is a sort of devotion which accords to the full with the nature of man and with the nature of God. And you have such comfort warranted to you in many ways, as when the Psalmist says: "They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance, and in Thy name they shall rejoice all the day, and in Thy justice they shall be exalted."[1] What more do you want! Here there are all kinds of comfort guaranteed, though not necessarily a single one in the natural order of sweetness and relish. You have the light of God's countenance shining on you to illumine the mind. You have the exultation of rejoicing all the day long, though it may be only on the high level of the spirit, where a good conscience in a pure heart is a joy for ever. You have exaltation in the justice of God, when He elevates you to grace and glory, with all the noblest gifts added to you of knowledge, perfection, friendship and happiness.

* * *

Benjamin. I know that souls have delights of their own, when their whole life is attuned to God.

[1] Ps. 88. 16, 17.

St. Lawrence, for instance, made that clear, when he was actually being broiled on a gridiron, and yet said or sang: "My night has no darkness, but all things grow bright in the light." And do we not find the choicest of souls subject to a craving for what seems to be natural sentiment? Here is a case I read of. The other day there departed from our midst one who was extremely dear to Our Lord, and who, amid distracting occupations, was daily entertained by Him in personal intercourse. Yet what was the aspiration of a soul so favoured? When Our Lord expressed His desire to be the constant recipient of attentions, the reply was prompt: "Yes, if you will give me a passion for you!"

St. Victor. Well, if you will have it so, let us come to that. This is the region of love's efficiency, where, as Hugh of St. Victor says, the soul finds out more by loving than by disputing, "*Verius enim invenit amans quam disputans.*" And, as love shows itself more by deeds than by words, it learns more by doing things for God than by lofty speculations about Him; which agrees with the sentiment of St. Francis, that a man really understands what he knows just so far as he goes in acting accordingly, "*Tantum scit homo quantum operatur.*" This is the great law of trying, and verifying things by experience.

So, if any one will enter into the field of a sentiment which is not sterile, but of a love which is operative, the first thing to do is to get rid of everything that will smother a religious feeling, correct and warm. This is a negative process which eliminates the wasting residues of bad habits or imperfect ones; and carelessness in this preliminary work accounts for the failure of so many good people, whose stock of opportunities, facilities and graces,

seems to be swallowed up throughout life in a sinking fund of imperfections and old habits, always the same.

A great secret of life is this to prepare the way for putting God in possession by clearing the outer senses, and to let faith, hope and charity bring Him in unobstructed, through patience in dulness, through vigour in tedium, and the assertion of a steady will in the face of any temptation. This negative work of purification is a large proportion of the ascetical life, which is the art of letting God into His kingdom. It has been likened to the desert land and the waste wilderness, where the Lord during forty years led His chosen people about, and taught them, that He might fit them to eat the fruits of more fertile fields, and suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the hardest stone, yea, eat the butter of the herd, and drink the milk of the sheep, and the purest blood of the grape.[1] All this asceticism is dreary, because so much of it consists in undoing what should never have been done. We should never have been caught by the things which we are clinging to, every claw, tooth and nail of ours being now engaged to hold us there, stiff and immovable. We have fastened our thought, memory and idea on place, power and means. We have invested affections and passions in a servitude to persons, comforts and superfluities. And we are of course deeply committed to the service of things necessary, which were only made to serve us; so that food, clothing and habitation, preoccupy our mind.

Self-control and liberty in the use of all these things allow the positive effects to develop—the assets to grow of virtue and devotion. These are indeed the flowering of the soul's own diligence, but

[1] Deut. 32. 10–14.

the very essence of them all is, after all, a divine work. For God, finding the tablet of the soul clear and clean, writes on it as He chooses. He depicts in the secret of the interior what He thinks fit of His Divinity. He covets the loveliness which He creates. When the little foxes that destroy the vines have themselves been caught, and the vineyard of the soul flourishes, then the Lord finds all fair, and comes to feed among the lilies: Thou art all fair, He says, besides that which is hidden within.[1]

This is the life and peace of the soul, which lies ensconced day and night in the tabernacle of His heart. If you are afraid of being seen in a home of such transcendent glory, you may observe it is so large and infinite, that you can live and sing unnoticed there, and can enjoy yourself meanwhile at His cost. The joy of living! The joy of thinking! and that without fatigue, because the intensest contemplation and love is only our powers in the full play of faith, hope and charity; and these, when unimpeded, operate with ease and pleasure.

Or, if you wish to be the host and have Him for your guest, there is the little room of your soul, which, like that of the prophet in Sunam, you always keep ready for the Lord to step into when He comes your way.[2] It is a little room, with a chair and a couch and a table and a lamp. The chair where He sits with dignity is your intelligence; the couch where He reposes, your heart; the table where He writes and reads, your memory, and there He also feeds on the fruits, old and new, of His beloved; the lamp is the light of your faith, fed by His grace. Perhaps you do not care to think of your heart as a cold marble tomb, which the Spirit lines with the gold of His gifts?

[1] Cant. 2. 15, 16; 4. 3. [2] 4 Kings, 4. 10.

BENJAMIN. Too cold and chilly!

ST. VICTOR. His sanctifying grace is warm, diffusing the sweet savours of virtues which it elicits, of the ointments and spices which it makes to flow. Then, with the incense of your prayer circling in God's air about you, amid the cushions and pillows of spiritual consolations—the like of which earth knows nothing of—even a tomb can become a paradise, and you can live and love and work and talk and eat and sleep. And He says: "Eat and drink, my dearly beloved, and be inebriated!"[1]

To further this busy life of exercises which have God for their object, and intimacy with Him for their result, Theodulph of Orleans wrote to the princess Gisella:

Assidue si ores, tibi si sit lectio crebra,
Ipsa Deo loqueris, et Deus ipse tibi,

"When you are praying constantly, and reading steadily, you are talking to God, and He is talking to you."

Keep these things simmering in your mind; be wholly in them.[2] And if you want a straight and sure path for arriving at the chaste nuptials between the soul and the Eternal Word, *Castum animae cum Verbo connubium*, as St. Lawrence Justinian conceived the spiritual life to be, continue to think upon the days of old, and keep in mind the eternal years,[3] when all that time contains becomes obsolete and perishes, and, though perishing, is imputed to our profit or loss.

* * *

BENJAMIN. For my part I must admit that I have rarely and scarcely known what darkness is in matters of devotion or faith. All is light to me even

[1] Cant. 5. 1. [2] 1 Tim. 4. 15. [3] Ps. 76. 6.

in the gloaming. "Their night shall be as the noonday."

St. Victor. "*Cogitationes robusti semper in abundantia*, The thoughts of the strong are always in abundance." It is the sluggard that lolls in penury.[1] Intimacy with the Infinite expands the finite, and our thoughts become active and prolific by contact. In a spiritual sense for the illuminated soul, "night shall illumine me in my pleasures," and it shall be bright as the day; "the darkness thereof and the light thereof are alike to me."[2] And again, in this illuminated life of meditation, where we dilate our spirit to the size of that which we contemplate, it is said so justly: "Thou hast given me, O Lord, a delight in Thy doing," *in factura tua*, or, as the Greek has it, in "*poemati*," from which we take the English word "poem"; and the Psalmist continues: "In the works of Thy hands I shall rejoice. O Lord, how great are Thy works; Thy thoughts are exceeding deep!"[3]

It is this joyous spirit that made the Ages of Faith so prolific in every good work. It is the same spirit which makes the individual soul at all times vigorous, energetic, "abounding" and "bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of the Lord."[4] Just at this moment a non-Catholic writer speaks of a book, called "Christian Tales and Christian Songs, by Dorothy L. Sayers," as reproducing "the childlike spirit and familiar intimacy with Christ, characteristic of the Middle Ages." And, in your private life, it is the broad daylight of His wisdom, government and providence, which draws you out of your couch, and out of all darkness, dulness and sleepy inertia. You go forth in the morn-

[1] Prov. 21. 5. [2] Ps. 138. 11, 12. [3] *Ibid.* 91. 5, 6. [4] 1 Cor. 15. 58; Col. 1. 10.

ing and work till the evening; though, with the contemplative, the whole of his life and work never wanders farther than the foot of the altar to negotiate the affairs of this world; for even from there is the course of the world directed, as the Church so significantly intimates in her prayer, "*Mundi cursus pacifice nobis in tuo ordine dirigatur*, Let the course of the world by Thy order be directed for us in peace."

Benjamin. That is just what I was saying all the time—the life of love and devotion, and entire simplicity, but with sentiment. For, I do not see how sentiment can be wanting if one truly loves. One loves wholly or not at all.

St. Victor. I do not say Nay to that. We are of a composite nature. Many parts go to the make-up of the whole. And, if the long arm of love reaches all the parts, then all go together. Thus, in your sense of the phrase, one loves wholly, if at all. But, supposing love's long arm does not control all parts, one does still love wholly, because the principal part loves, the mind appreciating God above all things, and the will or heart adhering to Him and His will alone. However, let me accord you the full measure of wisdom in what you say. I will acknowledge that in this composite nature of ours, you can never get the very best if any considerable part is left out. That is why, even among good people, you seldom have their best. They pass away to their reward with a large portion of their fields and estates still lying untilled. You have not got their best, for they never had it themselves, especially if opportunities in early life never developed the true piety of religion, with all its exquisite delicacies of emotion.

I will say more, that the margin of safety in a man's spiritual life is wider and greater, according as

he has the gift of affection and piety in a larger share and proportion. Piety affords a good anchorage, in addition to the moorings of reason and common sense. Our sensibilities are a large part of us. They are almost as much to us, and to our devotion, as the foliage is to a tree; for the leaves do not merely adorn a stem, they protect the fruit, and work for it. The plant breathes through the leaves, which to-morrow will be tossed by the breeze over the meadow.

Even in the practical hard matters of business life, you can see what our sensibilities come to. Though not the chief element of vitality and success, they are a determining factor, which makes us veer in one direction or another, and makes our neighbors do the same. I say, makes us veer, as under the capricious breath of the wind; for there is indeed a great deal of caprice about it all. We make friends with others, they become our friends or enemies, very much because of their susceptibilities, sentiments, prejudices, prepossessions. All mankind is split up and divided against itself, precisely because of blind prejudices, received in youth, which was susceptible as wax to take and is hard as marble to keep. If in dealing with men you expected that by dint of living uprightly, doing the right thing by every one, and keeping to pure principle, you would make friends of people, and make your way in life, a great delusion would await you. For you would find that, besides being right, you should be smooth, respect the nerves of people, do as others did, and synchronize with the pulse of their feelings.

Hence, since you are such a stickler for sentiment, I will concede to you that, in the highest interests which concern us, the elevation of the soul towards God will never be what it might be, if it keeps to

reason only—to that reason which keeps its two feet always on the ground, and will not hear of springing into the arms of God. It may consider expansion of heart and self-abandonment as good for women only or pietists, suited for devotional phrases in prayer-books, or perhaps to be tried as a pious exercise in times of spiritual retirement—an excursion, so to say, across the border of good hard sense, which gives and takes, and gives an inch to take an ell. Yet all this enlargement of the soul was the positive characteristic of whole Ages of Faith. It is still the characteristic of Catholic populations in the seclusion of remote country parts, where the hurry and the flurry and the sensations and daily novelties of newspapers and cinemas and money-making and politics have not penetrated to make of the generation what Our Lord expressed significantly, as the Greek text has it: "A generation unbelieving and scatter-brained"[1]—although, in modern parlance, it is just such a scatter-brained generation that is called a "forward" nation, and, if it is also unbelieving, it is reckoned to be so much the more advanced.

Montalembert, if I remember rightly, describes in his Life of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, a scene of nature's beautiful sensibilities, where the duchess and her husband, the landgrave, are in tears before the altar, and the author goes on to ask, what has become of this beautiful sentiment with us? where is it now with its charms, and its music, and its depth of feeling? The answer is obvious. All our life is on the surface. Entire nations, which were particularly heroic in times gone by, have no time now to pierce the surface for anything that is truly human and eternal, to get beyond the industry of money-

[1] Matt. 17. 16; Luke 9. 41.

making, and think profoundly, feel deeply, and do themselves the justice of being and feeling like men. By pure reason, or by what is called good sense, they can be logicians, and mathematicians, and astute men of business, who know how to plod their way through life, to grind grain, or to grind theses and problems. But it is something beyond, which has to furnish the capital for things great, high and noble, for things that catch up the whole man with his reason and sentiment together, when thought and feeling permeate one another, and mind and heart go wedded together and assist in spirit daily at the eternal nuptials of the Lamb. The emotional nature gives to intelligence a grip which does not belong to intelligence as such. It imparts to reason a power to realize and seize, such as cold reason knows of, and reads of, but never knows as its own. It gives the man a purchase on things ethereal, so that his whole nature becomes etherealized, being made beautiful and spiritual like the things it loves.

You see something of this in deeds of great natural valour, when strength, force and life are thrown into an effort, when wounds are received yet scarcely felt in the stress of the doing and the prowess of the deed, and all is even sacrificed in homage to an idea. Here in the supernatural world your idea is a great reality, nothing less than the Personal God Himself, who is your object and your model. Walk before Him and be perfect, and "Be ye perfect as also your Heavenly Father is perfect."[1] It was such an ideal that made heretofore the heroes of the world, many of whom bore in their flushed faces the index of a divine emotion within, while their hearts galloped in their bosoms. Such was a St. Francis Xavier who, in

[1] Gen. 17. 1; Matt. 5. 48

the course of less than twelve years, and without our means of transport, travelled in the far East some 100,000 miles, more than four times the circumference of the globe, converted hundreds of thousands from paganism to Christianity, and became the marvel that he has been to the admiring eyes of the Catholic, Protestant and Mahomedan world ever since. Of a heroism the same in kind, but different in mould, was St. Peter Claver on the other side of the world in the far West. During forty years he worked ever on the same spot in the port of Cartagena, comforting, instructing, baptizing the poor negroes, who were being brought into that part of the world by the slave-ships of Europe; and in those forty years Claver redeemed from paganism 300,000 of the poor slaves. Imagine forty years of being buried in such circumstances, of being shrouded in such paraphernalia of neglect, disease, ignorance, helplessness! The poor clients of St. Peter Claver were just a residue crawling out of ship-holds, where the lives of four in every five slaves had been snuffed out by the white men's cruelties and savagery on the voyage. Here is devotedness to a degree which equals any "passion," such as the saintly person you spoke of asked of Our Lord.

* * *

Benjamin. If philanthropy and tenderness for the suffering are emotional sentiments, we have seen plenty of them during the great war. But, as regards any relation to the Kingdom of God, they do not seem to answer the description which you have just given of those great servants of God and lovers of men.

St. Victor. Exactly! Philanthropy and tenderness are emotional expansions, no doubt; yet, when

they have nothing to do with religion, they serve to show how the emotional nature can lend itself to any motives which play upon it. The motive agencies may operate with religion or irreligion; they may be natural or supernatural; they may go out in an altruistic direction, or may be concentred in a perfectly egotistic and selfish object of intense devotedness to one's own ease. I have nothing to say against philanthropy. Only it is a pity that so noble a natural sentiment does not graduate into charity for the love of God, and acquire a right to an eternal reward.

You know, however, perfectly well that there are many good-natured people with whom the philanthropical emotion is merely an expansion of their good humour, a variation in the self-love which takes a trip sometimes in the direction of others. Men and women, whose lives are dedicated to nothing and nobody under the sun, who have no families, who mind no poor, nor sick, nor orphans, nor youth, do still indulge in a useful joy-ride now and then into the altruistic land of philanthropy; just as they do into a sentimental devotion towards dogs and cats. They receive their reward, at least when they direct their spare energies in the direction of human beings. They are approved of, and are thanked. But what I call your attention to, without prejudicing in any way the idea of philanthrophy, is that the emotion may be only a result of physical or physiological conditions; that the sentiment, the gush and overflow of feeling, which is neither virtue nor vice, may be conditioned by physical circumstance, and go to reinforce indifferently acts which are virtuous naturally or supernaturally, or acts which are vicious, such as the Pharisee's vanity and self-advertising with a trumpet at the street-corner. Of

themselves, these parasitical attendants, called emotion and feeling, may be antecedent to the rational choice of the will, helping to drive it; or they may be a consequence of the will's choice, which has excited the sentiments by the touching goodness of some philanthropy already practised. Thus persons become interested and enthusiastic, when once they have had experience and felt the luxury of doing good. But, as a principle to go by, Roosevelt said very well in a political matter, that "of all broken reeds, sentimentality is the most broken reed on which righteousness can lean." And he added very well that, if sentimentality is cultivated as a governing principle of character, then, like weakness and timidity of character, it can cause more far-reaching harm than violence and injustice. Why so? Because the violent have something hard in them; you can take that up and polish it. But the soft thing you can make nothing of. It is as limp and flabby at the end as at the beginning.

Benjamin. "All kisses and caresses!" was Pius X.'s description of a certain kind of education.

St. Victor. Resulting in lilies and languors, in roses and raptures, empty shows of life, painted on the whitened sepulchres of empty characters. If people remain innocent, it is not because they become virtuous in any line, intellectual or moral, but because they just happen not to become vicious; their circumstances stand in the way.

Benjamin. Dr. Charles Dana in America has spoken recently of a "modern malady," which carries feeble people to what he calls an "abnormal regard for animals." He says that bad methods of education produce the disorder in minds very sensitive to impressions, minds that are lacking in power to handle the problems of life, and to see things in

their right proportion, and whose mental life approximates to the conditions of dreaming. The particular method of education responsible for this is what he calls the popular "absorbent" style, that lets the mind follow its own likings and take the line of least resistance. And so, he says, a weak kind-hearted person may be very indolent and very selfish. That kindness, following the line of least resistance, pets a dog or nurses a kitten, because it is very much easier to do so, than to nurse the sick, to provide for the poor, to make a household comfortable, to tell the truth, or to keep one's temper. After the dog and the cat, he says, we shall come next to the "suffering of a fading flower," or the "thirst of a withering plant."—What do you think of all that?

St. Victor. What the Christian Brother said to me the other day, that there is no effective control left in the school, since the law won't let you. Which reminds me of what I mentioned before, that in other times they sinned *fortiter*, mightily, strongly, but they knew how to repent and do penance *fortiter*, mightily and effectively. But now feeble people sin torpidly, and they repent *ditto;* and their case is hopeless. Does not all this agree with what that Agnostic said to you: "Why should we make sacrifices in order to serve God?" It is too much to expect that any one should postpone a passion to God, should make a sacrifice of his covetousness, his license, his sloth, or any other vice, and be a man. This agrees also with what your American doctor said: Follow the easy line of dalliance, be velvety and smooth, and be empty. If the show of emotions will make you look sparkling and interesting, get up the show. It is easy enough; as Aunt Sarah has just remarked on the great war: "Most of us

get our emotions so, on the cheap."—But you have drifted off to education, haven't you? We were talking, not of making characters by good breeding, but of using character in the service of religion.

* * *

Benjamin. The question was how one can love appreciatively, and not also with sentiment. One loves wholly or not at all.

St. Victor. And I was showing you that emotion is only an accidental thing, not necessarily rational at all in our present state of nature. It may be irrational and vicious. So that we can never be held debtors to our emotions, and made to follow them. But we are all debtors to our reason, and bound to follow it. And hence the falsity and falsehood of certain systems, which make religion a mere matter of sentiment. The point I was engaged on was the intermittent character of emotion, and of that which is emotion at a high temperature, and is called Passion.

Such phenomena are notorious for going and coming, either with the fatality of a tertian or a quartan fever, or with the capriciousness of climatic conditions. They are so different from the rational and moral state of a mind and will, which determines a man's value, and fixes it at a certain mean level. They are like a tidal recurrence, depending on physical laws which influence good and bad alike. On the renewal of certain conditions, bad or feeble souls simply fall as helplessly as ever, or rather more so. For a while they seemed to be good; perhaps they were holy-looking; very probably they were even scrupulous. Now, certain conditions recurring, the rational will, which had been mistress for a while, hastens to alight, and the harlequin of the

old passion jumps into the seat, to drive—you know whither.

In good people, a similar psychology of revolving experiences shows not only former conditions of devotion, comfort and peace asserting themselves anew, but physical or physiological conditions coming to prey upon the spirit and depress it: "*Corpus quod corrumpitur aggravat animam*, The corruptible body is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation weigheth down the mind in its effort to think of many things."[1] In the best of souls there is an oscillation to and fro about a certain standard, an undulation up and down about a certain mean level. Leaving aside a merely blind emotionalism which is neither here nor there, and considering only a rational consistency in spiritual life and action, I say that the level or standard of the soul in this essential respect is the degree of positive power or self-habituation, which has resulted from many acts. This fixes the value of a soul in the eyes of Eternal Wisdom; though it does not weigh in the scales of Eternal Justice. For only acts and the omission of acts due are measured, weighed, rewarded, punished by divine justice; and neither the wicked are rated in judgment by what they were merely prone to do, nor the good by what they had acquired a capacity to do—that is, by the standard value of the soul. No proneness or acquired potentiality to reach easily a certain degree of goodness or badness fixes our place in eternity with God's justice. But, with God's wisdom, this level or standard of what a soul can be counted upon to do is highly relevant to His providence in conducting us through time, in drawing us on, and trying us, and training us, leading us about and teaching us, and keeping us as the apple of His eye.[2]

[1] Wisd. 9. 15. [2] Deut. 32. 10.

It is out of regard for this great fact of the soul's spiritual value, its degree of potency, its tensile strength under strain, what it is good for and what it cannot bear, that God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb; and, if the soul is not foolhardy, He will never expose it to be "tempted above that which you are able" to bear, says the Apostle. Here you see the mean level of the soul's powers clearly designated. St. Paul continues, saying: "God will also make with the temptation a way of issue and escape, that you may be able to bear it," while the force of temptation is on, and to despise it with relief of heart when the tempest has passed off.[1] The Psalmist expresses it as being saved *a pusillanimitate spiritus et tempestate*, from the feebleness, littleness and hesitancy of the heart within, and from the violence of the storm without until it has blown over.[2]

This same law of valuation by the mean level holds of men taken collectively, in the organization of a community or of an Order, which is rated in Eternal Wisdom by the average mean, or the general level between the high and the low, taking all in all that comes between. For, wherever there are men, there will be a high and a low, just as wherever there are waves there will be crests on the billows and troughs between. Envy will show where the crests are; shams will show the troughs. Wheresoever you turn, says St. Augustine, be prepared to have to put up with shams. Now, in the case of humanity taken collectively, it is the positive factors of persons and actions, seen, foreseen and amenable to justice, which serve the discerning eye of wisdom to fix the mean average of collective value; though the average itself is not an actuality submitted to divine judg-

[1] 1 Cor. 10. 13. [2] Ps. 54. 9.

ment. Nevertheless, this mean level is a gauge directing the divine wisdom in government, to purify and reinforce, to tolerate or to despatch, according as the subject is still useful, or has become a barren stock which should no longer encumber the ground.

BENJAMIN. What do you mean by shams?

ST. VICTOR. "*Ficti*," is St. Augustine's word. I mean by it what Tacitus described in the Sarmatian cavalry, 9,000 horse splendidly equipped. But, as their whole idea of war was that of raiding without running risks, their valour consisted not in the 9,000 creatures hidden under the armour and parading on the horses, but in the horses that carried them and the armour that protected them. "Marvellous to say!" exclaims Tacitus; "all their valour was outside of them, *extra ipsos*." Now there are always shams of that kind, who contribute no capital of their own worth and virtue, but live on circumstance, fund, fortune, prestige, and a valuable credit not their own.

* * *

BENJAMIN. The comparison of emotionalism with a tidal recurrence might seem to cast a slur on piety.

ST. VICTOR. On pietism, which makes religion consist in emotion. But piety is a beauty of our nature, and has always been recognized as a solid duty. From Greek classic times down we have it that a man can never pay off his debt of filial piety to parents or teachers, and of religious piety to God. The illustrations given of these virtues show plainly that sentiment, tenderness and affectionateness were in view. All that is sound sensibility, based on natural law.

But, if you mean pietism which is a religious tendency and feeling without a body to it, without any

doctrine or system of enlightened truth behind it, then I say, if anything moves at all it is only the recurring flush of the tide which will go down again. There is no genuine sentiment there; for there is no intellectual appreciation to start from.

You can recognize this emptiness still better in a certain Modernistic infidelity, which is being propagated. You took notice of it once before, that it has an object of worship, a "transcendent" kind of thing "behind phenomena," which object it professes to worship from the first with "passion"; or else, says this Modernism, if the sentiment to worship and adore is not "passionate," it is not religion. But what is all this transcendent thing which is to be worshipped from the very first with the excessive and erratic feeling of passion? Here listen to this man writing on Immortality. He speaks of the "tone of adoration" which appears in many poets. You see it is a "tone," and it is in "poets." Then he says, this is precisely religion or "the emotion of adoration, which is love tinged with awe." But towards whom? Now he begins to make his God, towards whom this adoration, love and awe shall be directed. He says, these emotions have "necessarily a personal reference." Our "delight and desire which are our natural response to beauty are, when that response is pure, a religious delight and a religious desire. They melt together into reverent love." But love for whom? The final answer is; "These emotions of the spirit imply the existence of a spiritual being as the object which has evoked them, and towards whom they are directed," without your knowing anything about this Being, who, how, or what he is! The road to this unknown God is by loving him, and the road to love him is by delighting in beautiful creatures and desiring them.

And, says he, since you have not got enough of all this here, you see how sure you are that you will have enough hereafter. There is the god of the Modernist's immortality: "It is," says the writer, "because beauty points us upwards to this halo of love that it [*beauty*] satisfies the soul, and assures it that the demands of love will be fulfilled."—That kind of religion will never do more harm to a passion or a vice than its older form did—pagan idolatry.

* * *

Benjamin. Speaking of genuine sentiment, might it not be said, that the slightest conception of Christian doctrine, and any share in the divine Sacraments, ought to be like incense in our thurible; that any particle of doctrine or grace should dissolve into the fumes and aromas of religious sentiment? Yet how comes it that we approach Holy Communion every day, and remain dry and unemotional as a stick? It is said that, as surely as iron will melt at a given heat, so surely will the heart melt at a given moral temperature. Now certainly the temperature is high enough when God is present, when His light is shining in my tabernacle, and my censer is just ready to throw out its fumes if only a grain of incense be dropped in!

St. Victor. You speak of the heart's moral heat, its moral temperature. The term, "moral," is a correct one for signifying the natural avenues of access to the soul, with resultant feelings and sentiments—all natural, and to be appealed to by their like, things of nature. Imagination and sentimentality are natural powers; and their acts natural expansions. But God and His grace are not natural; they are supernatural. The "supernatural" is that which is altogether above the course of nature, and is gov-

erned by laws of its own, inset in its essence. Here you might object, and say, that the human soul has been called "naturally Christian"; which seems to be the same as saying, naturally supernatural; for Christianity is, first and last, a supernatural religion. But that is not quite the meaning of the term, "naturally Christian." It is that the soul is naturally open to higher influences, that it is susceptible, capable of being readily caught up into the supernatural, as Habacuc was by the hair of his head.

Benjamin. No difficulty there! The hair lent itself very readily to be caught, if there was a hand to seize it. Now there is just the point! There is the divine hand to seize us. There are our possibilities. And yet so little comes of it all! Where is the music, discoursed by all the bass, tenor, treble registers of sentiments, which you seemed to be speaking of?

St. Victor. Well, first, what you say shows one thing, that religion does not consist in those sentiments, which are only domestics in service—and perhaps don't serve, and answer no call. You have come round somewhat from the time when you were making so much of emotional religion.

Benjamin. And you too have come round by the gentle law of curvature from tabooing all sentiment to giving it quite a style, title and nobility in the exercise of religion.

St. Victor. I wanted to keep it detached and apart, as a thing capable of most opposite uses, just as melodies are that can serve God or the devil—and it has been said that the devil has got all the pretty tunes—just as lyrics may be that sing to profanity or divinity; or the theatre, which began in the Ages of Faith with Christian mysteries, but long ago reached the antipodes in modern theatricals. St.

Francis de Sales tells us of a good Cistercian monk, who inscribed on the walls of his cell two lines of the sensuous Catullus, the holy monk impressing a sentiment of human passion into the highest service of the spirit:

Tu mihi curarum requies, tu nocte vel atra
Lumen, et in solis tu mihi turba locis,

"Thou my rest in care, thou my light in the darkest night, and, in the loneliest spot, thou the charm of company to me!"

BENJAMIN. So that we can attach our sentiments to anything.

ST. VICTOR. Sentiments are not attached in the sense of being driven. They are drawn out by the object, attracted and elicited. As St. Augustine remarks of the action which grace exercises on us, you don't drive a boy by showing him a nut, you draw him; and, he continues, you don't drive a sheep by holding out a handful of clover, you win it. On the contrary, that Modernistic emotionalism, which I described, makes of some sentiment, called "love tinged with awe," a kind of knight errant that goes about looking for some hero or heroine, and making the thing up, after having already spent on it "love tinged with awe."

BENJAMIN. Well, we have the object that is drawing us. But again to the question of enlisting lively sentiment!

ST. VICTOR. Here comes the second answer to your difficulty. It lies in the nature and operations of the Imagination. This is a great world open for culture. And here you will find the way of entering into a higher world of thought and contemplation, with all the stimulation you desire of tenderest and liveliest emotions.

Chapter XVII

IMAGINATION

Benjamin. I should like to know how imagination works on feeling and emotion.

St. Victor. Imagination is the faculty which links the upper and the lower in our composite nature. On the one side, downwards it is the eye of the whole sensitive nature beneath, gathering up the reports of all the outer senses. How you do body forth with that eye all things seen, felt and heard, yea, things no longer present, things distant and past, and you even build up new things out of such sensitive material, with that power of the imagination which is called Fancy! On the other side, upwards it reports such things of sense to the higher intellectual nature, which is ensconced in silence behind a veil, and can touch the outer world only through this avenue of sense. The high intelligence in a spirit like that of man is hidden indeed behind a veil, can see nothing, can hear nothing, except through the medium of imagination which passes on the reports of sense. All the original capital of our mind is circumscribed within the limits of those reports.

On both planes, above and below, in the intellectual world and the sensitive world, there is an appetite for what is good. It is called Will in the upper part. To it belongs Emotion and Passion in the lower part. In neither can this faculty of desire, of fear, of love, move an inch unless knowledge shows the way, the knowledge of imagination in the lower

nature, that of the intellect in the higher. *Ignoti nulla cupido;* if a thing has never come into view, it has never been an object of desire. If you know nothing of a thing, there is neither desire, nor absence of desire; it does not exist for you.

BENJAMIN. This seems to be very complicated.

ST. VICTOR. We are a very composite nature. The reason is because it is dull clods of matter, called flesh, nerves and sinews, which are elevated by the quickening power of the soul itself to the wonderful functions of representation, emotion, locomotion; all in the service of the impalpable, invisible soul, which is looking out to be fed behind the veil through the intermediary of the palpable sensitive nature and its functions.

The functions of what are called the five outer senses are well known. Every one can count them and their names on his fingers. But what do people know about the internal senses, where the connection is made with the spiritual intelligence, and through that with the will?

These internal ones are not the Five Senses, but they are the Five Wits. Shakespeare refers to them repeatedly, as when he says:

> My five wits nor my five senses can
> Dissuade one foolish heart from serving thee.

In old English literature, which here is harmonious with scholastic philosophy, these Five Wits were named Common Wit, Imagination, Fantasy, Estimation, Memory. It may be that they are all only five distinct functions of one internal sense, called *Sensus communis*, or Common Wit.

* * *

BENJAMIN. What do you want with five senses inside, or even five functions of one sense?

St. Victor. There is plenty of work for them to do. Common wit is that internal power which brings the scattered reports of the outer five senses together; and therefore it is called "common."

Imagination reconstructs all in the drapery and colours proper to the objects seen and felt.

Fancy adds thereto, or reforms as it chooses, in the way familiar to poets and musicians.

Estimation, or, as scholastic Latin has it, the *vis æstimativa*, is the knack of sense in imitating intellectual judgments, as when a dog looking out of a window goes down to the garden below, not by tumbling right out and breaking its legs, but by going back to the stairs, and tripping down and round, just as if it had worked out a set of syllogisms with a logical faculty.

Finally, sensitive memory is easily understood. When you have taken an incautious glance at the sun and close your eyes on the spot, you have that sun in your eye for five minutes afterwards, kept there by the organic power which is sensitive memory. You may taste something to-day; and an old association of sense immediately arises which carries you back years, and even to childhood: "I have not tasted that since the long ago, in such and such a country!" Dreams are the magic ground for the rioting of sensitive memory, which comes playing and romping and hauling out things either of fair report, or of another mould, fuming up from the steaming deposits of passion. To the former kind of memory's reports in dreams the commentator A-Lapide applies those words of the pure-minded spouse, thinking of Christ: "I sleep, but my heart watcheth."[1] To the fumes of the latter kind he applies these lines of Claudian on Proserpine:

[1] Cant. 5. 2.

Omnia quae sensu volvuntur vota diurno
Pectore sopito reddit amica quies,

"Whatever the sense fondles by day fond sleep brings up when the mind is stilled in slumber."

Take notice how all this is but an outer life of reference to things sensible in the midst of which we are; and we are ourselves, half-and-half, things of sense like the world to which we belong. None of these Five Wits have anything to do with the knowledge of the spiritual self that is looking out and using sense, or with the perception of things abstract, eternal, spiritual. For all this high order of apprehension we must have other powers which are spiritual, not material like the senses—powers which are characteristic of a spiritual soul. We have three great powers of this order: Intellect, intellectual Will, intellectual Memory—a trinity of sublime faculties, which being spiritual can explore the thinking subject itself, and can speak of "Me" and of "I."

In this introspection comes the perception of law and liberty, of duty and responsibility, as you have in Shakespeare's description of conscience. The murderer in *Richard III* says of the conscience that he had: "I'll not meddle with it. It makes a man a coward. A man cannot steal but it accuseth him; he cannot swear but it checks him. . . . It is a blushing shamefaced spirit that mutinies in a man's bosom. It fills one full of obstacles; it made me once restore a purse of gold that I found. It beggars any man that keeps it; it is turned out of all towns and cities for a dangerous thing; and every man that means to live well endeavours to trust to himself and to live without it."

* * *

Benjamin. We are sinking deeper and deeper in a world ever wider. Five outer senses, five inner wits, three spiritual powers!

St. Victor. Well, that is only yourself! There is no harm in knowing ourselves. If heretofore you have had only a distant bowing acquaintance with so interesting a personage as your own self, there is no reason why you should not shake hands at last, and come to know one another. I might add to the foregoing what is a complement and finish to the perceptive faculties, that is to say, I might describe the motor activity, locomotive power, and all the wondrous structure in which it unfolds its functions.

But I want to pause in considering the imagination, and its powers for serving the intellect.

> Those numerous worlds that throng the firmament,
> And ask more space in heaven, can roll at large
> In man's capacious thought, and still leave room
> For ampler orbs, for new creation there.

If the month of May is said to be the landscape painter of the world, we have a perpetual May within us that not only reproduces what the fairest painter can make outside of us, but can remake all according to its whim and fancy.

Benjamin. But how does such an exercise of imagination agree with those rigid functions of a high and dry reason, on which you insisted so much?

St. Victor. There is no contradiction between reason and imagination. The latter is the valet of the former. You have a striking instance in the policy of St. Ignatius, who, if ever there was a man devoted to reason in spirituality, exhibited the calm discretion of it in his whole person and life; and with whom it was a fundamental maxim in the government of

his Order, "*Semper ratione utantur*, Let them always use reason." Now he was the very person who went all the way to Palestine, who ran every risk by land and sea, among strangers and Turks, to see the holy places with his own eyes. And why? For the purpose of cultivating his imagination, to train it as a mighty servant of his reason in meditation and contemplation. And he never propounds a meditation but he maps out the parterre for imagination and fancy to range in, while reason analyses, affections are warmed and the spirit soars. Indeed, we think in images. We have to do with the abstractions of pure reason, what I may call "staging," setting up the abstruse in some form, place, colour and figure. And people speak of imagination where least you might expect it. They talk of a business imagination, a military imagination, a mathematical imagination.

No doubt more is meant here than what comes strictly under the name of imagination or fancy. There is meant also the sensitive memory, which picks up and presents for use, comparison and association the remote stores of images lying in the sediment of past accumulations. The memory is the eye for searching these deposits of past images. There is no one who has not heard enough in his life, and read enough and seen enough, to be a very learned person, if only the things were at hand on the surface, and lent themselves in service here and now to the management of a logical reason. But worlds of knowledge are buried in the sediments of a stratified forgetfulness. And the vast utility of past phenomena and images, if they could only be brought up into association with the new and latest experiences, is all lost and sunk in the deadness of deposits unstirred. There it is, and not in any difference of mind or soul,

that you will find, I take it, the difference between persons who are called talented and persons who are considered dull. It has well been said that we know as much as we keep alive in our memory. Our intellectual memory is always full; but it is not stimulated except with the help of sensitive images; and these belong to sensitive memory which calls them up, and to imagination which presents them. Then the highest acts of intelligence are put in full play. And the person is considered capable, perhaps brilliant; whereas another would be just as much so if the grist he has in store came round to his mill.

Now in the life of spiritual thought we have material which is easy to handle, and we have that which is difficult. That which is easy is the historical thought and scenery of the Gospel and the Old Testament; and you have also the vivid descriptions of prophetic vision, as in the Apocalypse and in Isaias and Ezechiel. That which is difficult is the abstract doctrine as of virtues, sin, eternity, which do not paint themselves to the imagination and arrest it. And the danger is that this great power, until sufficiently trained and inured to order and discipline, will merely move about in a restless and erratic way to the utter disturbance of the intellectual household, which must have peace and quiet for its meditative and contemplative work. You see why in the ascetical life the exercises of mental prayer are introduced with preludes that apportion to the imagination its duties and occupation during the process of thought. What belongs to that power, with the judicious help of fancy, is to fix the place, forms, figures, movements, deportment and manner of conversing, in the subjects of thought contemplated.

* * *

BENJAMIN. Imagination plays so great a part that it seems to govern everything, by helping or refusing its help, as when it declares a strike, or plays truant.

ST. VICTOR. We may be content with saying that it is a great gift. Now it is precisely through the imagination that the chords of sensitive emotion are touched; and the current of affection, yea, of one's whole sensitive being in the impulse called Passion, sets out to the object of sense presented. It was at this point, as you remember, that you brought up the whole question of imagination, by inquiring how lively sentiment was enlisted. All this is on the lower plane of sensitive life.

Higher up there is another system of currents. Through the intellect the chords of the spiritual will are touched, and the current of rational affection, which may be quite apart from sensitive emotion, yes, the current of one's whole being as a rational creature sets out to an object worthy of appreciation and love. Now suppose that these currents of rational love and sensitive emotion come to harmonize in direction and synchronize in time. Then what an accumulated force of impulse and energy will be discharged in action, apostolate and life—"in patience, in trouble, in necessities, in distress, in stripes, in prisons, in seditions, in labours, in watching, in fastings, in chastity, in knowledge," and all the other exercises of heroism, which St. Paul describes to the Corinthians![1]

Here you have the hero or the heroine. Here you put your finger on the secret spring, which makes the difference between peoples and races, why some have the heroic make for things great, and others not so, but only for things practical. It is in the emotional nature which does or does not lend itself to enlist in

[1] 2 Cor. 6. 3–10.

the service of the ideal. The same applies to ages and sexes. Where simplicity rules in a character, impressions are communicated through the whole being, and a response elicited with promptness and completeness. Thus women and children are credited with a unity and force of sentiment, which souls less transparent or minds more sophisticated do not experience. Where this framework of heroism has not been tampered with, but the emotional nature has fitted into the intellectual, we have seen the heroism of Christian martyrs exhibited with a simplicity and whole-heartedness quite astonishing—they went to their doom trembling, and yet they went as to nuptials. So is it said of St. Caecilia, that "what she feared, *quod timebat*," she commended to the Lord, fasting for two days and for three days at a time. And so she reached the consummation of her perfection and her life, by means of the fire and of the axe. All this done with perfect deliberation! It is particularly noted that she sang before the Lord to the accompaniment of her musical instrument, "*Cantantibus organis Cæcilia Domino decantabat*," saying in the words of the psalm: "Let my heart become immaculate, that I may not be put to shame!"[1]

* * *

Benjamin. This is the object or effect of martial music to raise men's spirits, and carry battalions forward in the face of wounds and death.

St. Victor. It fires the imagination with images, and the imagination touches the emotions, which, for the moment, carry off the whole man in one direction by the intensity of sensitive impulse. You see where certain schools of modern philosophers, and the whole school of Modernists, have completely

[1] Ps. 118. 80.

missed the point in both philosophical thought and theological, when they have propounded feeling and emotion as a distinct faculty in us, or something working in us independently of our knowledge and guidance, whereas it is only the glow of our appetitive faculty, seeking at a higher temperature than usual the objects presented by sensitive knowledge. All this combination of sensitive knowledge and emotion is to a degree under the control, and to the same degree under the responsibility of the intellectual will.

But the error of treating emotion as a distinct faculty has noteworthy results, in the direction of liberating a man's conscience from all responsibility to God. Thus, when theologians like the Lutheran Schleiermacher have made all religion to consist in a faculty of emotion which makes one feel his dependence on a higher Being, it is clear that there is no need of any truth regarding Him; for an emotion is not a knowing thing; it is just something stirring as with a sense of wings, lifting itself up, and trembling long "with premonitions sweet of song." In all this there is no need of stating truth distinctly, of formulating dogma to express facts ascertained, of exercising faith as seeing the unseen. All is unseen. It is but a blind and dark sentiment groping and catching at what it is not necessary to define; because it is professedly in the dark. If it does insist upon stirring for some half or quarter-idea dimly discerned, emotion put on horseback may ride anywhere. It is known as fanaticism. All excesses and violence perpetrated in the name of a mistaken religion have derived their force from the explosions of unbridled passion, which could even quote Scripture for its purpose, as one famous demagogue was fond of rushing into battle with his pikemen to

the cry, "Let God arise and His enemies be scattered!"

* * *

Benjamin. But wherever emotion comes into service it is blind. Then we should distrust its premonitions or disposition always.

St. Victor. The thing which emotion serves need not be blind. The imagination itself is not blind; and still less the rational nature, which knowing and willing harnesses emotion to its intelligent chariot. Here you come back to that service rendered by imagination and emotion, when the rational intelligence of divine faith receives from them an accidental vividness and vital grasp called by some "realization," by others a "real assent" to articles of faith. This brilliancy of light changes no quality in the faith of the mind. When it throws upon the articles of faith the concentrated glow of live portrayal in meditation, when it projects the witchery of light and colour in sensitive imagery on the object of your spiritual contemplation, it only adds somewhat to the quantity of adhesiveness, over and above the fixity of assent caused by rational motives of belief.

Happy those innocent souls who have never contracted the cancerous disorder of images and sentiments wildly grown in past experience! If there has been such confusion or disorder, the first step in reclaiming the imagination is to cleanse it by letting importunate images die out, and not rousing the sleeping dogs that are wont to bark and bite in the emotional nature. After that, the funds of reserve imagery are to be enriched. If you want to know how, I can tell you easily by asking a question. How do people cultivate their imaginations night and morning round about you in the world?

Benjamin. Do you mean, what they see? One thing is clear. The day is nowhere if there be not the theatre or opera to wind it up in the evening. If there is any dreary half-hour by day, the novel is sported. And, when all this palls, they run elsewhere, somewhere about this world.

St. Victor. To see something, to cultivate the imagination, to fill it, and fill out an imaginary life, remote from the duties that make time real with something substantial in it! Now do the same for the spiritual life, but with the realities of things. Nothing so beautiful and ravishing as the true—to know things as God sees them, to feed our faculties with heaven and earth, with time and eternity, all from God's point of view; to see the evolving periods of the world's progress with the eye of His providence; to follow with the illumined eye of Christianity the course of Christ's ways upon earth, and all the biographical, topical, historical elements which centre in Him. He is the One Man who fills the whole horizon of God's supernatural providence in this world. This is just one of the meanings in those great words: "*Ecce Homo*, Behold the Man!" In Him we contemplate His Church, His Saints, the operation of His Sacraments, the development of His kingdom—with the charity, justice and peace, intended to be the atmosphere of men's lives—with the wars, cruelties and disasters, temporal and moral, which men have set up out of their own devices, and have called the "failure of Christianity."

All this is the field for contemplation and daily thought. Here we are among the Angels who round about the throne stand contemplating with keenest interest the unfolding of the human drama, until the shades of even lengthen, the day of human history sets in judgment, and in the winding-up every clue is

unravelled at last, every fold in the secret of each soul is laid out open, every claim to sanction and reward, to a name and place, shall be honoured once for all, and the world with its history shall be rolled up like a tent of the night, for which there is no use in the morning. And yet few would leave the world if the world did not leave them; few drop the mortal coil of their sins and passions, if their vices and sins did not drop off, and leave them stranded under the Eternal Eye of a Wisdom and Justice incorruptible and undefiled![1]

* * *

Benjamin. There is a tone of severity in the midst of all this splendour.

St. Victor. The splendour brings home the lesson of the severity; which is that we should know as we are known. We should not lead an imaginary life out of accord with realities. When all is at stake we are wise in considering that nothing is done till all is done, and nothing too much to ensure the one thing necessary. See how that is carried on in the intensive cultivation of our imagination and mind together, not merely by the live and vivid teachings of the Church's doctrine, but by the living drama of her liturgy; of which, in its deep significance and conveyance of substantial doctrine, I quoted for you once what a literary man, no friend of the Christian altar, exclaimed in St. Peter's: "Too beautiful not to be true!" In the sacred liturgy there unfold scenes of beauty, variety, significance and depth. They are transparent with the life of Christ shining through, with the analogies of faith in everything He did and taught and left to be unfolded further as occasion offered; with the scenes of His bodily life amongst us so aptly reproduced in the life of His

[1] Wisd. 7. 22.

mystical body since His Ascension—from the manger to the Cross, the Angel announcing, the Babe of Bethlehem weeping, the star shining in the east, the scenes of word and work following one another on land and water, all to be maintained in life and teaching by His Church till the end of time: "A mystery of godliness, which was manifested in the flesh, was justified in the spirit, appeared unto Angels, hath been preached among the nations, has been believed in the world, has been taken up in glory!" [1] In this vast analogy of faith, thus set out before you in the liturgy of Christ's Church as well as in her life historically, what is there needed for the cultivation of your imagination and intellect, except that you do what you are invited to every day in your prayers: "Let us meditate on these mysteries!" that we do "imitate what they contain, and obtain what they promise, through Jesus Christ Our Lord."

Here you have a source of power for leading and directing a Christian life. You have the forces in reserve for facing a Christian death, and martyrdom itself on behalf of truth or virtue; as the liturgy says in praise of a martyr, "The Lord Our God fed him with the bread of life and understanding, and gave him the water of wisdom to drink;" [2] and in praise of doctors the same liturgy says, "In the midst of the Church the Lord opened his mouth and filled him with the spirit of wisdom and understanding." [3] For all this you see how necessary it is to provide the material of thought by a meditative life. For as, if you had no eye you could not see, or if, having an eye, but no light, you could discern nothing in the dark, just so, if you have an eye of intelligence and even the light of faith offered you and diffused about you, but there is no object presented to know and believe,

[1] 1 Tim. 3. 16. [2] Ecclus. 15. 3. [3] *Ibid.* 15. 5.

then you will believe nothing and know nothing. As St. Paul argues: "How can they believe, if no one preacheth!" Now meditation has been described as preaching to oneself, instructing oneself, with thought, reflection, examination, reading, hearing, and praying. Hence results unity in thought, purpose and life. What else is life for but unity? *Ex uno omnia; In uno omnia; Ad unum omnia!*

* * *

Benjamin. I have read just lately in the eulogy of a certain young convert, that "it is rare to meet an intelligence endowed with a marked unity of purpose."

St. Victor. What is correct in such a statement comes to this, that it is a rare thing to find mind and will working promptly, generously, harmoniously together. Insight into what is true and right grows faster with good people than consistency of life, which generally drags behind. Of course it is rare to find such a genuine Christian or saint; for this is a unity and harmony which permeates the whole character. What else is that but to be a perfect Christian? As his reason obeys God, everything else in him obeys its legitimate superior. The intelligence follows the will's behest in honestly pursuing truth. The will follows the intelligence where it lights up the way to moral action. The senses below from the imagination down take their place in legitimate service to intelligence and will above. And, if the representations of things through the imagination are bright enough and breezy enough, the emotions are excited; they are fanned into passion; and even the passions of the saints glow only in conformity with the just value of things, in fair proportion and right direction. Then, while affections and passions be-

come too intent upon their higher service to pour themselves out any longer on creation around, the high thought itself, the memory and idea are cleansed of superflous creatures, and importunate representations; and the use of things is cut down to the limits of necessity, charity and obedience.

For observe, Benjamin, what Hugh of St. Victor and spiritual writers say. All things, in relation to our use, fall into one of three classes. Some are so bad, that you can never be right in doing them; some so good that you are never wrong in pursuing them; some are neither right nor wrong in themselves, but indifferent—good if done in the right time, place and circumstance, bad if done otherwise. Of these indifferent actions the greater part of our life is made up; and our manner of using them gives them their moral character: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever else you do, do it all for the glory of God." The other two extremes are expressed neatly in other terms; *Quae semper prosunt et nunquam obsunt*, Things that are always profitable and never hurtful, like virtue and grace; and *Quae semper obsunt et nunquam prosunt*, Always hurtful and never profitable, like sin and vice.

It is wisdom that governs all this in a man; as the Sage says in Holy Writ: "She teacheth temperance, and prudence, and justice, and fortitude, things than which men can have nothing more profitable in life." [1]

Benjamin. You refer all this to a divine wisdom. But reason might appear to be enough for putting unity of purpose into life, with a good will assisting.

St. Victor. Alas! reason itself, however unlimited in its native resources when properly drawn out and in succession, is altogether too limited in its daily

[1] Wisd. 8. 7.

vision of actual issues to govern the great household, yea, the little world, of a man's composite interior. Reason is running into darkness all round about. Our horizon, which always travels with us and shuts off from view what we do not see, hides a much vaster world than what our limited range for the moment does command. And thus, the field of obscurity beyond at every point of the compass being much more extensive than our patch of practical vision nearer at hand, life is uncertain in view of many ulterior objects, and may claim an excuse for being fitful and double-dealing; whereof St. James says, "A double-minded man is inconstant in all his ways." [1] A higher light is necessary, the direction of a higher mind. And that direction is never wanting in the grace and faith which are offered, if only man will use them.

Just see what a composite nature we have to manage. As St. Francis de Sales observes, we are looking, hearing, tasting, touching, moving, feeling, understanding, willing; we are talking, walking, playing, singing; there are all the occupations of outer physical, mechanical and artistic life; and from all is issuing a variety of works and effects. Besides the multiplicity of departments in this complex administration, note the servitude entailed by having allowed the external visible world to get the first purchase on all this, and to get into possession—the possession of a grip on us because we have to deal with the world of sense and imagination, because we have to use it, because it shall always be with us; then the possession of that further grip on us in the affections and passions which the necessary use of material things is prone to excite in us; after all that, the further servitude which we undergo in the

[1] James 1. 8.

thought, memory and idea of these carnal and gross things. Our higher powers forget their pride of place, and they step down to the menial service of thinking about food and comfort, catering for style and wealth, wallowing in the mire of mere materialism. And they get their teeth so deep into the bone they are gnawing that they would not drop it, though you offered them a crown or a throne, paradise and heaven.

* * *

Benjamin. But since Our Lord appealed to reason to guide us in unity of life and purpose, may we not do the same, and take reason as sufficient? He appealed to Martha's understanding only, when he said, "Thou art busy about many things; only one thing is necessary."

St. Victor. Oh, reason is quite enough to know where unity is, to prize it, to long for it, and to esteem its privileges of wisdom and virtue. Our good sense has always been appealed to on behalf of this understanding. "Learn where is wisdom," cries Baruch, "where is strength, where is understanding; that thou mayest know also where is length of days and life, where is the light of the eyes and peace."[1] Then he goes on to declare how few have made such wisdom their own. But Our Lord showed to Martha one who had succeeded in doing so. Mary sat at His feet in contemplation, drinking in His doctrine and grace. She had the better part already, and in itself and in its effects it should always remain with her: "Mary hath chosen the best part, and it shall not be taken from her."[2]

Here Our Lord designated a unity subjectively in the person whom He praised. It was that of senses and interior powers, with all their thoughts, affec-

[1] Bar. 3. 14, *seq.* [2] Luke 10. 42.

tions and cares, being gathered up in the Object present to that contemplative soul; as He implied when He blamed Martha for being "anxious and troubled about many things." There was unity objectively, both in the Person, whose words and actions arrested the contemplative mind, and in the purpose for which the soaring thought of that soul spread its wings and hovered above Him, to the end that it should never lose Him more. So He said, this best part was not to be taken from her.

Here was the solution of the most practical question which the distractedness of our life can raise. It is that the many things, the ways and means, the cares and anxieties, which divide and split up our precious thought and life, may be gathered up in the unity of intention, in the recollection of contemplation, and be carried round in a circuit; and, as they all came from one, *Ex uno omnia*, and are the while all supported by one, *In uno omnia*, so they all come back with us to the bosom of One, *Ad unum omnia*. I told you before how precisely in this same sense theology was a science, which brought everything round through the whole circuit of existence, by reference to Him who is their beginning, middle and end. For all its matter is either God Himself, or what is of Him, or for Him, or unto Him, or from Him.

This is what all Christianity has led to. Christendom has been the social embodiment of it all. The quiet majesty and contentment of private life, illumined by devotion; the cradling of public thought in the framework of religion; the arts and sciences, a perfect web and woof of intellectual and mechanical activity, for the furnishing of the abode in which Christ's kingdom lives upon earth; all forms of charity luxuriating in the genial air of Christian

virtue and perfection—these things of beauty, of such a unity in purpose amid such a vast variety of material means, came about, and were meant to be brought about through the organic efficiency of Christianity, because of the God who is all one, yet all in all—"one God and one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus,"[1] operating in one Spirit amid all the vastness of divine goodness poured over creation; one "Spirit in the bond of peace; one body and one Spirit, as you are called in one hope of your vocation; one Lord, one faith and one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all."[2]

Now have you thought enough of images, and of that which gives them their beauty—multiplicity reduced to unity?

* * *

BENJAMIN. Not at all!

ST. VICTOR. Then take a final instance of imagination at work and of its performances. I refer to language. First and foremost, this vehicle of intellectual communication expresses such facts of outer life as we see, taste, touch, etc. It is primarily an implement for intellectual traffic in handling things of matter. But the intellect has a higher life of abstract thought, on things which are not palpable, and are even extramundane; things not of the den, the tribe, the market and the forum, but of transcendent truths which are eternal, and sentiments which are spiritual. Now for this life of the spirit we have to take language as we find it, and harness things ethereal to words and phrases already appropriated by things gross and palpable.

BENJAMIN. That is just what occurred to me the other day in relation to a certain saint promising be-

[1] 1 Tim. 2. 5. [2] Eph. 4. 3–6.

fore death to descend from heaven and revisit earth and friends. Descending and ascending! when God and His Saints are always with us and about us!

St. Victor. The plain and flat imagery of going up or coming down is just an instance of how language under a material image conveys something which the intellect apprehends well enough, but understands much better when thus clothed in imagery. What is meant is that communications of affection and patronage will be made, will recur, and are of their nature intermittent. Language is thus raised to convey the contents of higher thought by the help of imagination, which plays with images, likenesses, analogies, metaphors, tropes of all kinds, and sublimates the gross talk of daily life to produce the highly wrought vehicle of poetic, scientific and spiritual thought. You catch this process in the life-cycle of so many words, which beginning with the little patches of our material life pass on through a line of meanings, and are promoted to the most refined uses. Even for the expression of things which eye has never seen, as in the visions of the prophets, this dull language of every day is pressed into service; and the imagination, which controls the whole process, is made to combine images, to mix them in ways which earth has never witnessed, in order to convey the scenes and truths of a supernatural world not yet seen. I might liken the difference in matter of contents between the vulgar meaning which a word may have had and the exalted significance which it can acquire in poetry and spirituality, to the difference in the question of form between what was called "dog-Latin" or "kitchen-Latin," and the style which is known as Ciceronian or classic. It remains true, indeed, that the exigencies of high thought or feeling surpass the possibilities of our

language and imagination, and will call for the help of music to interpret what cannot be expressed in words, and will leave depths of thought and sentiment still unsounded. But it is clear how much we owe to imagination for the art of mere expression.

There is a good deal more. This power of ours finds no difficulty in framing language for the intellect and will to use in addressing the Most High. It does so after its own fashion, and in its own way. In what other way should it devise the style of addressing God, save in the code of our natural imagery and with all the charms of our native humanity? God made man so, and understands him so—I mean the God of the Christian, not the god of the Modernist; for that being of the Modernist, "that thing behind phenomena," is according to the latest pronouncements something "like the sun which makes no rules" or commandments, and like Jupiter or Mars has no personality whatever. It is only a Transcendent something, an immanent something, which you make up and trick out for yourself.

To invoke the communication of the real and personal God with us, and obtain his further aid, we pray Him not to forget, yea, to remember: "Remember, O Lord, Thy compassion, and Thy mercies that are from the beginning of the world."[1] Using the franchise He bestowed on us of asking for anything, and He would be at our service, we bid Him defend us: "Take hold of arms and shield, and rise up to help me. Bring out the sword, and shut up the way against them that persecute me. Say to my soul, I am thy salvation."[2] A wonderful spectacle! exclaims Bellarmine. The faithful soul contemplates God standing armed from head to foot on her behalf —with arms defensive like the shield, and offen-

[1] Ps. 24. 6. [2] *Ibid.* 34. 2, 3.

sive like the sword. And, not content with that, she wants the comfort of His positive assurance that there He is: "Say, I am thy salvation;" just as in another place she bids Him let all the world see, how He is standing up for her: "Shew me a token for good, that they who hate me may see, and be confounded; because Thou, O Lord, hast helped me and hast comforted me."[1] And so, especially in the oriental style of the Bible, language which was bred of things in the dust and on the earth, is raised to the highest conceptions of converse with the Almighty, of protection from Him, redemption by Him, union with Him: "Arise, why sleepest Thou, O Lord; arise, and cast us not off forever! Why turnest Thou Thy face away, and forgettest our want and our trouble? For our soul is bowed down to the dust," cleaving to the earth. "Arise, O Lord, help us; and redeem us for Thy name's sake!"[2] Does all that seem very natural?

* * *

Benjamin. We are accustomed to it all our lives.

St. Victor. Do you appreciate the significance of the fact that this obvious use of a man's own faculties in his own business with his own God, has been picked up, carped at and ridiculed by the latest school of Modernists, for two purposes; the first, to supplant prayer with a very respectful silence, for, say they, God knows everything, then why speak? and for the second purpose, which is already conveyed in the first, that God is not a Person at all; He is "like the sun that makes no rules" or decalogue!

Here is a Rev. Doctor recently promoted to a new chair of Ecclesiastical Art in London, who has been making fun in America of Christian prayer and the

[1] Ps. 85. 17. [2] *Ibid.* 43. 23–26.

liturgy. He has written a book on *The Art of Public Worship*, and he has published other things. Such an expression, "Lord, hear our prayer," he declares to be a "meaningless archaism"—meaningless, because, I presume, the Lord need not be told to hear; and an archaism, out of use, because it is the style which Christianity and the religion of the Old Testament always used, and of course both are dead at the feet of Modernism. Upon such a phrase as "Remember," addressed to the Most High, this Rev. Doctor gives rein to his usual cynicism, and condemns it as "seeming to jog the memory of Omniscience." You may remember what I quoted for you on a former occasion from a certain Dean, who denounced the repetition of prayers, and called it by implication a pagan exercise; for he quoted the old pagan, who used the term, "*fatigare deos*," and the Dean translated the Latin phrase into "pestering the gods," applying the term to the question of Christian prayer. With a funny cynicism of a similar kind, our Rev. Doctor, professor of Ecclesiastical Art, finds fault with the prayer, "*Kyrie Eleison*," because, says he, it was "originally used in pagan worship." He stops short in his argument, and does not carry it to its logical conclusion, that bread, meat, air, water, and a number of other things were used by pagans, and even in their worship, and therefore we should have nothing to do with them. But he also finds fault with "*Kyrie Eleison*," for the same inept reason as before, that God always has mercy, and therefore we should not ask Him. With his fine Christian sense he holds those words to be non-Christian because of such a theological implication.

But, in a moment of forgetfulness he relapses into a commonsense observation. He says of the word, "Remember," applied to God: "Such is the inade-

quacy of human words to heavenly meanings! Perhaps the truth is that, when old prayers cannot be altered, they can be taken in a metaphorical sense, or at least as extremely natural *cris du cœur*." Precisely! Then what is the meaning of all this cynicism, and bitter humour at the Bible, which he professes to believe and teach as a Protestant minister? He makes the reason clear. The Decalogue is there; and many other things are in the Bible. He does not like them. He denounces the Decalogue as contrary to truth, but says he of his kind: "We clergy have ftom long mortifying custom lost our conscience in this matter." That is, they have been preaching purity, honesty, fidelity, sincerity, as prescribed by the Decalogue; and some of those things are neither to be alluded to nor observed.

Chapter XVIII

OUR LORD AND IMAGINATION

Benjamin. If imagination and its imagery is to interpret truth, I do not see how any unity can be assured to truth, when it is so diversely interpreted by the witchery of fancy.

St. Victor. Truth is not interpreted at all by imagination. It is only clothed, and represented in figure within, for the intellect to read the substance of the thing; or it is expressed in figurative language without for intellect to communicate the substance to another intellect. Does the substance depend upon the imaginative figure, which is not merely transparent but illuminating? And, if the figures change with place, time and men, does the substance change? Is a man different to-day because the coat he wears is different from that of yesterday? Nay, if any one is foolish enough to opine that all there is in a man is only his clothes and style and purse, does that folly change him one jot or tittle?

There, my dear Benjamin, you have just touched as with a needle the very nerve of Modernism in its treatment of the Bible, of our Lord, and the Christian articles of belief. It says that we are always bringing to faith, as time goes on, something of our own. This indeed is very natural in nineteen centuries, amid so many nations and so many styles of thought. Now from this obvious platitude Modernism slips over to the substance of faith, to the Personality of Christ, and to every truth about God—all

the substantials—saying dogmatically that all may differ and change with time and peoples: "One faith persists even when it is expressed in forms most divergent from that which prevailed in the early centuries." Here another, in *The Hibbert Journal*, says: "At no point in the development of Christianity has Christian faith been the simple acceptance of the Person of Jesus, any more than of His miracles, but that the believer has always brought something with him, and that something not the same. He has formed Jesus in the image of his own needs and ideals." And this, says the writer, makes of the Incarnation, not a simple fact, but a very complex one.

But, on the contrary, let us notice that this very fact of the Incarnation, or God Made Man appearing among us, shows distinctly how no complexity of imagery or detail can alter the reality of a plain central substance. For was not a fourfold Gospel by four different men in different places, and for distinct uses, a very complex proceeding in describing one character, which surely ought to come out different in a fourfold treatment so "complex?" And nevertheless among so many wondrous things one result issues clear, that an unmistakable Person, an identical character, the very charm of our humanity in a living breathing Person, stands out on every page of the Gospels, in the midst of facts differing, speeches not the same, signs and wonders selected by the Evangelists as suited to their purpose. Here you have varied clothing, "complex" representation, the greatest variety of imagery in the setting of the scenes and the succession of events, and with all that, only the one Person stands forth. What do you think of the Modernist's fallacy in confounding a man with his clothing, in order to get out of the Bible

a new fashion of Christ and Christianity for the seasons and generations as they come?

* * *

Benjamin. Do you imply that this argument from imagery or the clothing of truth is the stock in trade with the Modernist?

St. Victor. It underlies a simple fallacy by which he is trying to "popularize," as he calls it, his theory —throwing dust in people's eyes by casting up in a medley accident and substance together, what appears and what is understood. It is quite a favourite mode of proceeding now in the English-speaking world; the object being to get rid of all the plain things which the Bible says in the Old and New Testament, and to juggle with the entire Christian Creed which is the basis of Christianity from the beginning until now. The propagandists are largely and chiefly persons who have sworn to Christian Articles of belief, to the evangelical truth of the Bible, Old and New Testament, and who, having lost all Christianity, but keeping their places, must find a way of compromising between what they appear to be and what they are, and must palliate the contrast by "popularizing" their compromise. One venerable professor of Oxford, Sanday, in the midst of a great amount of roundabout talking, came plainly to one statement: "The first and third Gospels must be regarded as poetry not prose."

Nothing plainer than that there is plenty of variety, action, movement, in all the incidents of our Redemption, and in the manner in which the nations have looked back and addressed themselves to the Object of their faith, the Redeemer of their souls, and the organizer of their bodily life and well-being in Christendom. But does not all that variety just em-

phasize the identity of the fact? Do you find that things become more complicated, and not rather more simple, when you meet an identical unit under a variety of forms? Is not all human nature more conspicuously one when, under the variations of a thousand million individuals, it is ever the same humanity that stands forth, north, south, east and west, with identical ways of thinking, feeling, suffering, rejoicing, and manners of expression? The same poet, the same dramatist, the same musician can touch kindred chords in all hearts by a single strain or tale. Our Lord conveyed identical truths to all under the forms, so intelligible to all, of beautiful parables. In fact all mankind shows its kin, when one touch of nature sets the fibres of all hearts vibrating together.

The reason of it is that God "hath made of one," as St. Paul stated at Athens, "all mankind to dwell upon the whole face of the earth"; that the whole human race is a continuous thing, one "mass," as St. Augustine so persistently calls it; that it is all bound in one society; that man's characteristics are eternally identical; that in every one there is the same resistance of matter to that spirit which was breathed into him, and made the material being the living thing he is; that there is ever going on the same effort of the spirit to crystallize and illuminate the matter, succeeding in some and failing in others; that for all this identical "mass" in unnumbered millions of responsible individuals there is one identical way, truth and life, that is to say, Christ, through whom the path lies to all perfection, in whose mouth is all wisdom, and in whose gift is every means of organic grace for the incorporation of each soul in His mystical body. Thus the Incarnation gathers up all mankind in the unity or union which is divine, "re-

establishing all in Christ," or, as the Greek word has it, bringing all to one head in Christ.[1]

To look back from this union or unity, which is the scope of all in the Incarnation, to the complexity in man, which is meant to be so divinely gathered up and sealed with the Spirit of God, I will add with Hugh of St. Victor five elements in man's psychology, although you did express wonder a while ago at the complexity already discerned in man's physical, sensitive and intellectual being. These five elements are in a higher order still. They are in the supernatural dispensation of Providence.

They are, first, that God is our physician, coming to us in the Incarnation. Secondly, that man is the suffering patient here, having fallen sick in sin, and in its many disabilities of mental blindness, feebleness of will, the fury of his fighting instincts, and the riot of his desires. Thirdly, that the priest is the minister or messenger of the physician in dealing with the patient. Fourthly, that grace is the antidote or remedy. Fifthly, that the vases containing such precious contents of grace for all our evils are the Sacraments, by which all the force and efficiency of the Incarnation and Redemption are conveyed to our souls.

* * *

Benjamin. Mr. Hutton, who was once editor of *The Spectator*, advances this reason for the credibility of the Incarnation as the dominant mystery of our life here; that the excitement and the languor, says he, the joy and the sorrow, the storm and the sunshine of this unintelligible existence, becomes more intelligible to him, and the vulgar chaos of our existence is reduced to some order resting on an eternal basis, if we accept Christ as God made Man, and if

[1] Eph. i. 10.

we believe that it is the same divine mind of God ever present which is shining in our consciences now, as in the person of Jesus Christ was found conversing among men, and entered here into the poorest of lots, among nearly the most degraded generation of the most narrow-minded race that the world has ever known, and made it the birth-place of a new earth. Do you call that clothing truth in imagery?

ST. VICTOR. Yes; but let us take Our Lord's way of presenting truths most abstruse and varied, consoling and terrifying. He draws a picture of Himself as the Good Samaritan. We are the wounded wayfarer lying by the way, with no one to care for us. He comes a long way and out of His way to pour into our wounds the wine of His divinity and the oil of His grace, even though, to cure us, he must stand the expense of carrying us at his own cost into the refuge of His Church, crowning with special merit the good works of supererogation which any one else will do for the suffering member: "*Quidquid supererogaveris*, Whatsoever thou shalt spend over and above I at my return will repay thee." [1] There you have a picture of why God came and was made flesh and dwelt among us, of how grace is dispensed in Christ's kingdom, and how charity presides over the organism of Christian society through the course of ages.

But there are conditions for the efficiency of divine grace. One must be willing to meet God's overtures and accept His beneficence. To that effect He presents us with the picture of His nuptials, which the Eternal Father has prepared for the Only Begotten, in effectuating the union of the divine with our humanity. All are invited. The outlay of supernatural grace and gifts for attending fitly is supplied by Him

[1] Luke 10. 35.

gratis, at the door of the spiritual house which we are called to enter. Only neglect and presumption can account for our daring to appear before Him without donning the garment of grace so liberally offered. And this wantonness excludes the wayfarer from the eternal feast for evermore.

The nuptial garment is an imaginative figure for moral and mental purification and cleanliness, which the Lord must have; as the angel said in the vision: "Take away the filthy garments from him. And (the angel) said to him; Behold I have taken away thy iniquity, and have clothed thee with a change of garments." [1] Of those who will not change, nay, who will no more shed their passions than the leopard will blot out the spots in his skin, the Lord presents many images. The net draws in all kinds of fishes, of which those that are not good are simply thrown away. While men were sleeping the tares were sown over the good wheat, and then they come up in due time, good and bad together. The conditions of human society, where all are bound up with every body else, will not permit the tares to be pulled up roughly, or the grain would come up too. Wait for the harvest, says He; then, like chaff which is driven from the winnowed grain, the bad will go into everlasting fire.

* * *

Benjamin. As far as I see they are always asking why should evil of any kind ever be, if God is good and can do away with it in the world?

St. Victor. The chief reason for that question is to do away with God, by crediting the idea of Him with goodness, showing that there is evil in the world, and therefore concluding that God cannot be. But let us see. If you mean by that word the only

[1] Zach. 3. 3, 4.

true evil which is, then you are designating sin, or the choice which a free will makes contrary to the law of right. Now that power of the free will to choose wrong instead of right could have been avoided only by making men automatons, without any free will at all; but then they would not be men, and they would have no part or portion in fixing their own destiny. They would have no destiny at all, any more than a stock or a block has. The function and scope of free will is precisely that of taking our happiness, like our souls, in our own hands, and possessing it in our own right: "Teach me Thy judgments; my soul is continually in my hands; and I have not forgotten Thy law."[1] But free will cannot do this without being able to do the opposite, as you see every day in the mad way people run their freedom to death. Here is the one evil of creation—sin; which bears testimony to the reality of what it violates, free will, and of what it vitiates, the virtues and merits of freedom. All the other things reckoned as ills are only incidental to our many-sided nature. They have been permitted as consequential to sin, that since man did the work of sin he should have the wages, culminating in death. "For the wages of sin is death." "But now being made free from sin, and become servants of God, you have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end life everlasting."[2]

Nothing easier than to set things right, if the will is in the right place; as St. Ambrose says elegantly of the two classes which make up the Church of Christ, that the one knows not sin, and the other knows it no more. For the Ninivites came back to God by penance while the Queen of Saba represented innocence. The innocence of the one seeking the wisdom of Solomon, and the penance of the other

[1] Ps. 118. 108, 109. [2] Rom. 6. 22, 23.

returning to sanity, portray the mystic body of the Church, *ut aut peccare nesciat, aut peccare desinat.* It was with these examples that Our Lord denounced the Pharisees, who wanted neither innocence nor penance; while the Sadducees, being materialists, could not even tolerate free will.[1] But how plain he made it all in the stories of His parables!

There is the story of the Prodigal Son coming back repentant. See the luxury of sentiment on both sides, that of the son's sorrow for the past, and of the father's joy in forgiveness, while each hangs on the other's neck. We see the issues at stake from another angle in Lazarus at the rich man's door, where no one gave a morsel to him, but God received him in eternal bliss. With more than poetic justice the rich man found himself buried in hell. Again from another point of view we contemplate that other rich fool, whose conscience, or whose sicknesses admonished him that he might die any time; and in fact he was doomed for that night. And yet what was the poor materialist thinking of? That his barns were too small for his harvests, and his income was too copious with its steady downpour, and he would enlarge his barns, and extend the base of his speculations to take in more and more. He could have taken in a happy eternity at any time for the asking. He could have asked at any time, even at midnight, as the Lord said of the importunate friend who must have his loaves in the depth of the night. God never sleeps. He is waiting all the while to be asked by us in the right of our freedom, in order to give in the enjoyment of His goodness. But, instead of that, He can only say to the rich man's soul: "Thou fool! this night shall they demand thy soul from thee; and these things, whose shall they be?" You have

[1] Luke 11. 30–32

eaten enough, you have drunk enough, you have played enough; it is time to go, *tempus abire est.* And, in fact, they are all gone, with nothing to their account, neither heaven nor earth; and the nest they were lining for themselves has not followed them!

* * *

Benjamin. You said that other ills, short of sin, were not real evils, but only consequences of sin committed by man. How is it they seem to hit the wrong persons? Why do the wicked thrive?

St. Victor. Ah! you are entering on a wide field of divine providence. For the present, let me just say that there is no question here of being the right person or the wrong person for merely physical evils and social wrongs to light on. Let me use an illustration of St. John Chrysostom. When any body stumbled on a purse of gold dropped by the road side, was he ever fool enough to ask whether he was the right person or the wrong person to find it? He would just pick it up, and be so much the richer. And I say of all evils, other than sin, that they are the currency of heaven, and one criterion of God's judgment on mankind. The currency of heaven, because "blessed are you when they shall persecute you!" They are the criterion of God's final judgment on us, since He says: Come ye blessed of My Father; because I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was in prison and you visited me. And, amid so many spiritual works of mercy, He expressly provides that you shall forgive your neighbour seventy times seven times. So you see the justice of St. Augustine's summary statement, that bad people are in this world, either to be converted to good, or to exercise the good in virtue.

There is no man's life but is rich enough and productive enough for a yearly, daily and hourly yield of precious moral fruit. And the Lord represents Him-

self as coming to the fig-tree, looking for something to eat. Finding nothing, even so He does not cut it down, but waits another year, hoping that what He planted and cultivated may not after all be a mere cumbrance on the ground. To many of His servants He has given rights of administration over others, with the power of governing them. He expects that one who is a dependant himself will respect fellow-servants, and show regard for the master. But when in the end nothing comes of the administration save drunkenness and tyranny, then does the Lord separate such a defaulter, and appoint him a portion with the hypocrites. To whom much has been given, he shall be punished with many stripes; to whom less, he shall be visited with fewer stripes. It is not the same for a man to have sinned once, and to have sinned a hundred times. Far from it! It is as different as one is from a hundred. Nor, on the other hand, is it the same to have been faithful over five or ten cities as over one; for to the latter is given the reward of one city to be possessed for ever, while to the former five or ten are given in perpetual tenure.

BENJAMIN. But that is a matter of mere opportunity. Some had the chance and others not.

ST. VICTOR. Yes; and those who had not a chance incurred no responsibility thereby. But God's liberality showed its play there, and afforded no excuse for jealousy. "Is thy eye evil because I am good?"

BENJAMIN. Is there no way of making up for opportunities which do not come to hand?

ST. VICTOR. Yes; the desires of Daniel, who had less opportunities in his captivity than any of the prophets, put him in possession of more prophetic knowledge than most of the prophets; because, said the Angel, he was "a man of desires."[1] However,

[1] Dan. 9. 23.

there is no reason for looking after opportunities, since every one has more than he uses. Our Lord depicts Himself as a sower who goeth out to sow. And what becomes of His seed which is something far more than mere opportunity? Part of it was an utter failure, the seed falling on rocky soil. It is what is spoken of to-day as the "failure of Christianity." The rest of it lighted on different kinds of consciences, which yielded from thirty-fold upwards. Some did yield a hundred-fold.

* * *

BENJAMIN. Amid this exuberance of imagery and story, does not Our Lord seem to convey one truth, that alas! there is no exuberance whatever in the quantity of fruits gathered among men?

ST. VICTOR. Something like what He experienced on the shore of the sea of Tiberias after His resurrection. He appeared there in the morning, after Peter and the others had been fishing all the night, and He asked: "Children, have you any thing to eat? They answered Him: No!"[1] That is our balance of accounts!

BENJAMIN. All the fruitfulness that results from His culture seems to be the intensified grace of just a very few—a parterre of sanctity here and there in the grey wide world!

ST. VICTOR. We cannot quite say that! For you have His splendid image, so perfectly true in the Christian religion and in the Christendom of human society, how a tiny mustard seed develops into a noble tree, such that all the birds of the air come and perch on the branches thereof. These branches are the variety of lessons, doctrines and dogmas, which issue from the one deposit of divine revelation placed

[1] John 21.5.

in Christ's Church; and they are also the variety of virtues, graces and gifts, in which His faithful find their rest and build their nests. You have again the leaven, which breaks up the whole inert mass of humanity, making it good, wholesome and sound.

Both reason and experience show us that there is more going on supernaturally in the world, and most of all in the parts least conspicuous, than we wot of. If you take the noisy garish side of human life things go badly indeed. You have the restless splashing of people who must get some fish to fry. You have the hubbub of all the adventurers who have their axes to grind. You have the prose and the poetry, the guile and the sophistry, of people who want to persuade themselves of something, and go dinning it into the ears of others, till it must become true. But experience shows us all the while that the still current, which flows deep and silent, has that in it which all the noisy splash of the spray has not.

Reason corroborates this more liberal view of man's honesty and integrity, as God made him and meant him to be. Men are not universally fools or knaves. Take the Sadducees, for instance. They were downright materialists, of whom their own nation sang: "The fool said in his heart, there is no God!" They did not believe in a soul and immortality. Still they were not altogether fools. For, when Our Lord noted that His Father called Himself the God of Abraham, and He was not the God of the dead but of the living, they had wit enough not to answer. If nothing else, at least their family pride withheld them from urging that their Father Abraham counted for nought any more, in time or eternity.

A great number of people to-day are less solicitous on this point of family honour, and their own indi-

vidual caste in time and eternity. Not only do they say, they know no God, and pride themselves on their Agnosticism, but they are content to be ranked as a *caput mortuum*, a dead head—themselves, ancestors, posterity, all in a heap. They say, they only go into a cloud hereafter, misty or fiery, whither, as Tyndall put it, the shade of Raphael had gone before. However, do not affirm that all mankind is made up of such people and their like.

On the contrary, God is always finding those stewards who are alert and waiting for Him when He comes; and He is ever rejoicing as He sets them over all He possesseth. All that He possesseth is Himself, as you know. Now, imagine a creature put in charge and possession of God Himself. That is just what we have, first by the gift of the Incarnation, and then by the reward of a glorious retribution—enough to keep us panting, like the hart for the fountains of water. "I inclined my heart to do Thy justifications for ever *propter retributionem*, because of the reward." [1] Of this the good father reminded his elder son, when, having extended forgiveness to the younger son, the prodigal, and put the whole household in motion to serve up a great feast, he said to the elder one: "Son, thou art always with me, and all that I have is thine!" And so He says to all His faithful servants, of whom He has not a few, that He will make them sit down to meat; He will gird Himself; and passing will minister to them openly, as at present He does covertly for you in Holy Communion.

* * *

Benjamin. This is a crowded gallery of pictures! And every one shows a trait in the character of God!

St. Victor. And it is inexhaustible, as well for

[1] Ps. 118. 112.

the variety of imaginative clothing in which Our Lord dresses profound truths, as for the profundity of the truths which are so persuasively presented; as again for the revelation of so many crystalline recesses in the simplicity of His own character, which is being revealed from so many sides. When the Personal Truth is speaking He can tolerate the fiercest light brought to bear on Him from all possible intelligences. And you see how minds that do not want Him and foreswear Him cannot keep away from Him. They take revenge for their helplessness in His presence by reducing God to the ranks, and pretending that Christ shows off well in company with Mahomet, Buddha, and all the rest of the tribe, not excluding themselves. You would almost think sometimes that you were reading the glowing pages of a Christian, when you trip over some infidel, open or secret, who is fencing with the idea of Christ's divinity. But he is only edging his way to getting Christ, God incarnate, into line with the incarnation of Indian deities.

For the human heart meanwhile Christ is the Life of our life, *Vita vitæ nostræ*. Human love contemplating Him catches the flame of supernatural charity. Considering those words: "Son, thou art always with me, and all that I have is thine," we may share in the thoughts of Da Ponte, and exclaim: Then Thy grace is mine, Thy heaven is mine, Thy Son my Redeemer is mine, and Thou Thyself art also mine, in whom all these Thy good things are contained! And mine are also Thine. *Tu mecum, et ego tecum*, I with Thee and Thou with me! *Idem velle, idem nolle!* What you like, what you don't like, that is the rule for me! St. John of the Cross indulges in similar exclamations; and appropriates to himself everything on God's earth and in the heavens. He

grows bolder still, and sees everything melting into the Beloved One:

> My beloved is the mountains,
> The solitary wooded valleys,
> The strange islands,
> The roaring torrents,
> The whisper of the amorous gales.

But, returning to whence we started, I say that, in the imagery of Our Lord appealing to our imagination, you have an inexhaustible fund of that illustration by means of sensible clothing and pictures, which you have so often asked for in trying to manage abstruse propositions. And notice two salient points in the great variety of images, parables and similitudes, which I have so lightly sketched for you. One is that, though He Himself, God Incarnate, is largely the subject of so many diverse pictures, still what an unmistakable unit of character stands forth in the multiplicity of traits exhibited! And the other point is, that, His doctrine is like Himself—so individual and such a unity, unmistakable and uncompromising, though covering the numberless particulars of human life, and presented in all the shifting variations of human imagination and experience.

What do you think of the Modernist's Relativity of Truth, or Accommodation Theory, which would find under every new image and statement an assertion contradictory to other statements, for the childish reason that Our Lord wrapped up the same doctrine in divers figures, and that the generations of Christians in different countries and climes, which have used ways of thought suited to their environment, must all have meant different things? The Modernist says opining: "In the matter of religion we are all artists," that is, he says we are making up

different truths, when we are clothing the same truth in different fashions and modes of expression. The Modernist continues: "We must all produce our own natural expression of our beliefs, which will necessarily differ from the expressions of the past, if they are to be our own and sincere." There is an excellent instance of the Modernist's confusion in sophistry! Nothing is truer than that we produce our own native expressions of things. Nothing falser than that these expressions make the things different from what they were. "Jesus Christ, yesterday, and today and the same for ever!" [1]

The Modernist complains further; to take any message of Christianity from authority which hands it down would be "blind obedience," he says; and he brushes it away in a lordly style. From this it appears that all the intelligence he has ever acquired of science, of art, of politics and of civil life has been "blind obedience," because received on the authority of others. But it is not obedience at all: it is faith. And it is not blind, seeing that it is intelligent. To believe that Baghdad is in Mesopotamia has nothing to do with obedience. It is reasonable belief.

* * *

Benjamin. Well, I was justified in demanding sentiment and imagination. And it occurs that, if Our Lord played so on our imaginative and sensitive nature as if we were a harp, His Church has a right to continue doing so with her light and colour, her grace and music.

St. Victor. The Church's whole person is a reproduction of Christ's person and life. She is represented as *circumdata varietate*, adorned with the unity and simplicity which come of variety in peace and

[1] Heb. 13. 8.

harmony.[1] She clothes the divine worship in all the beauty of the arts; and she herself moves in all the dignity of an exquisite liturgy.

Benjamin. Was I not indignant the other day at what that gentleman said, when he failed to obtain a permit for the great function at St. Peter's! He spoke of people going "to see the show."

St. Victor. Why were you indignant at that, when you knew he had failed to get his permit? The best things turn sour to the sour. You have it in the whole life of the Church. With those who put up with the wrong thing, the Church is one of the sourest things in creation. Nay, so is God Himself for that matter, as Our Lord said. If people choose to be under the wrong master, they will "hold on" to him indeed and put up with him, since they must be under somebody; and they will affect to "despise the other." It is only those who have got into the right place that can afford to love; they "love" the right master, and "hate the other."[2]

But, as to the effects of the liturgy, they were well touched off by Browning in half-a-dozen words, as I mentioned before. He stood in St. Peter's. It was the moment of the consecration. The silver trumpets from the dome sounded the welcome of their sweet tones to the Lord upon the altar. The multitude, partly wrapt in the light clouds of incense floating over them, worshipped prostrate in silence. And at this moment, when the heart of devotion palpitated in the presence of God made Man come amongst us, the unbeliever was smitten beyond the power of words to express. But what he did express was well conceived: "Too beautiful," he exclaimed, "not to be true!" And Gladstone also described the effect produced on him when he set his foot in St. Peter's. A

[1] Ps. 44. 11. [2] Matt. 6. 24.

spectacle broke upon his eyes—that ministry of symbols, those channels of grace, that unending line of the Popes joining all times to Christ the Head of the Church. "A sublime construction!" he said, one which gave him the idea of Christian unity. This is that Christian unity which the sixteenth century had seen bartered away over a large part of Europe for something else. Gladstone added that thenceforward he began to feel his way towards a true notion of the Church. He never reached it. But you see the function of sacred art and ceremonial in speaking through the imagination to the mind as even a preacher might not have succeeded in doing.

* * *

Benjamin. The children of generations that fell away seem to be making up now, in the imitation of Catholic rites and ceremonies, and fairness of liturgy and all beauty. They are falling into line.

St. Victor. My dear Benjamin, falling into line requires a line to fall into; which, with intelligent people in matters of mind and will, means the clear apprehension of fixed truth and principle. Without a religious truth, infallibly presented and known to be true, all the conventions which are indulged in under the name and title of the "Good, the Beautiful and the True" are only a jelly-kind of movement, which cannot find a line to fall into. No fluttering of pretty practices avails aught if there is no substance of Sacraments behind. Pious devotions come to little if not pivoted on the Real Presence of Our Lord. All the talking and preaching possible is only beating the air if you are not there to give something, that men may be cured and healed and qualified to go and do something.

However, there is nothing to say against good as-

pirations. The other day a non-conformist minister in England lamented the misery to which his co-religionists had been subject ever since the Reformation. Owing to the want of Catholic liturgy, art and beauty, they had been forced to exaggerate the value of what he called formulas and sermons, and of other rationalistic or argumentative aspects, which have given their temples the appearance of so many lecture-halls. Prayer, he said, and praise have subsided there into a rhetorical show or else dreary reading, where worshippers have been supplanted by critics, where spectators flank the affair with curiosity and staring, while the whole show inspires neither reverence nor silence nor the propriety of good manners. This minister went on to declaim against "the stupid cry of no-Popery." He contended that the beautiful and healthful symbolism of Popery was precisely what was needed. Simplicity, he added, did not consist in baldness and coarseness and starved sentiment. How do you like that?

BENJAMIN. Very well indeed! Have you any more?

ST. VICTOR. In Boston recently a minister descanted on what he called "The Unhappiness of Protestantism." He gave a lengthy description of the cheerfulness so evident in the Catholic Church. This subject, I see, is attracting the minds of outsiders, who, however, if they had read Digby's *Ages of Faith*, *Mores Catholici*, would have seen the facts abundantly illustrated and the reasons of the facts indicated. But, as to the Boston minister—he was of opinion that such cheerfulness was quite in keeping with the announcement of the Incarnation: "Behold! I bring you good tidings of great joy." [1] Here, he did not observe that the continuance of

[1] Luke 2, 10.

such effects resulting from the Incarnation was due to the continuance of the Sacraments, particularly that of Confession and the forgiveness of sins. This and the other Sacraments bring the Incarnation home to every generation which comes into existence, and they draw out for every relay of humanity those effects direct from the Incarnation, which like a living spring wells out direct with its waters to the thirsty traveller of yesterday, to-morrow or a hundred years hence, without any reference whatever to all the other travellers coming in between. The Boston minister alluded also to the gloominess of the Puritans, who went through life humming their surly hymns. But he explained the gloom, such as Puritanism has favoured and such as Catholicism has not, with a distinction borrowed from Carlyle. The distinction seems to involve no difference. He said that the Puritan Roundheads had blessedness, but not happiness. So he whistled the difficulty off, by implying that the blessed in heaven need not be happy, and that Catholics on earth, if happy, need not be blessed. Well, there is some truth in that, if he was rating millionaires and speculators as his types of blessedness.

Chapter XIX

RATIONALISM AND NATURALISM

Benjamin. Well, because I proposed a question about Religion, you have analysed and dissected most of what is in us. If there is anything left that is not yet cut up, I suppose it is our reason. This you began with as your foothold, or rather as your stronghold; and you have never left it. Why not finish the operations? Take Reason now, and let us see what will become of it.

St. Victor. Oh, reason is not the only thing left. There is that in which reason is rooted, the principle from which it comes, and to which it always must adhere. That principle is called Nature. Like reason, all the other faculties which we have considered, such as the imaginative and sentimental, are also endowments of nature.

For what is Nature? It is the principle of activity and of work. As by Nature we mean the original Being or fund of existence in us, all the active powers or faculties originate in this fund, and adhere to this stem of being. Hence, if you want things analysed to the last elements you must go beyond man's reason to man's nature. Again, if you want to take things not only at their positive value for that they are, but also at their negative rating for what they ought not to be, then you have the excrescences or extravagances of both reason and nature; or what are called respectively Rationalism and Naturalism.

Take them at their positive values. Then Reason is the spiritual power which sees truth, which deduces

it from premises and antecedents, which analyses and tests it; and, in matters of moral life, presents the dictates of truth as the guide of action to the will. By the Will we mean that reasonable appetite for desiring things which is the proper complement of a reasonable intelligence knowing things. Now, as all that is plain, it is enough for the positive or constructive view of Reason and Nature.

What concerns us more is a negative aspect of these things, when they are not discharging their functions rightly. They give us the outgrowths of what is called Rationalism from reason, and Naturalism from nature. I say outgrowths, like those excrescences which run out so awkwardly from the cactus in all directions. But those of the cactus are not organically unsound.

* * *

Benjamin. Now that will suit me; because, a while ago, I read under this heading of Rationalism a set of items, which I should be glad to understand. Under the title of "The Recrudescence of Rationalism," a cry of alarm was raised, directly by an Anglican clergyman, but indirectly as an echo of what Cardinal Vaughan had called attention to before his death. It was reported that huge editions, some of them amounting to 30,000 copies in one impression, were being sold of Huxley's *Essays and Lectures*, Clodd's *Pioneers of Evolution*, Laing's *Modern Science and Modern Thought*, Matthew Arnold's *Literature and Dogma*, Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe*, Herbert Spencer's *Education*, Grant Allen's *Evolution of the Idea of God.* At the same time, the American public wanted more literature in the style of Draper's *Conflict between Science and Religion;* and Dr. A. D. White, ambassador of the

United States to Germany, was meeting the public half-way with his *Warfare of Science and Theology*, a special product of his labours as ex-professor of history at Cornell University.

St. Victor. I am glad you took those notes. They are illustrative of the question, what Rationalism is, and who are its champions in the book-stalls.

Rationalism is the system of thought which professes to take nothing on another's authority—at least if that other Person is God, or the representative of God upon earth. It accepts hundreds of statements everyday, with mouth wide open, all agape, if men are gossiping, or reporters are retailing things true and untrue. But, when God's Word is in question, it will believe nothing, unless the rationalistic mind sees, tastes, measures, weighs and applies valuations of its own to facts. We hear ever so much at present of "new values" for facts and truths, that is, new glosses of rationalistic notions clapped on to truths and facts, making them palatable to rationalistic tastes.

Suppose now that this rationalistic habit diffuses itself through a man's whole character, so that he feels, chooses, acts, walks, runs through life without any reference to God, and instinctively centres in himself as the measure of the world and of providence, of what it is, and what it ought to be, you see all a man's powers come to be affected; the error creeps like a canker back through the powers into the Nature in which they are rooted. Intellectually, a second nature is formed like an incrustation; and it is called Naturalism.

Quite apart from the excrescences of Naturalism in life and Rationalism in thought, there is that which elevates Nature and Reason to realms above—not beyond what they can reach, but beyond what they

can reach by their own power. This is the world of principles and forces supernatural. It is a Supernaturalism which paganism groped for and sighed for, as when Seneca said: What good is there in man if he does not raise himself above what is in him! And the pagan world flocked to the supernatural religion of Christianity, to find relief from the mental blankness and moral corruptions of old Greece and Rome, as well as from the destitution, intellectual and spiritual, in which the newer and purer barbarian nations found themselves lodged from birth.

This supernatural life addresses itself to the Personal God, and takes up the attitude of accepting God's word, His witness and revelation, as an elementary basis for a reasonable mind to rest on. It assumes the character of what St. Paul calls a "reasonable" or spiritual or logical service, *logiké latreia;* and he proceeds to require that we "prove" what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.[1] We appeal to this feature of the reasonable in the Sacrifice of the Mass when, at the sublime moment of the consecration, we couple God's ratification of the Sacrifice and the reasonableness of our service together, saying: "Do Thou condescend to make this oblation in every particular blessed, adopted, ratified, reasonable, acceptable." Or, as a certain collect has it: "Always meditating on reasonable things, may we carry into execution what is agreeable to Thee." Nothing more reasonable than that we should believe God; and nothing more agreeable to God than a life that is reasonable. Our intellect has no franchise to fly off into the imaginary and unreal, skylarking with truth, attributing all sorts of false values to it, and seeing no proportions or limits in the use of unaided reason.

[1] Rom. 12. 1, 2.

It is because of this unreality that Rationalism is a shrunken-up product, a system atrophied round the greater part of its circumference. It leaves out the whole world of divine faith, that better world the prospect of which alone makes life worth living. It joins hands with that Positivism, or as we call it Agnosticism, which makes a point of not knowing God or anything concerning Him. If it does acknowledge God, for Rationalism is a shifting film of divers colours and scenes, then it is a Deism, which will allow Him no active relations with the world of His own creation, no other providence over it than that of having given the initial start to things, and now letting them go as they may. So it was that the prophet Sophonias described the rationalists of his time, "who say in their hearts: The Lord will do no good, neither will He do evil." [1] Or else this Rationalism is a mere form of Scepticism, which shrugs its shoulders, especially at the high and sublime and divine, hardly sparing the matter-of-fact and pragmatical side of things. Or, under a form which is a fashion just now, it affects a dilettante Æstheticism, which goes into "passionate" ecstasies of its own over "the Good, the Beautiful and the True;" and then slips over into a Romanticism, which abandons reality and all truth for the airy notions of artists. In all this, as you see, Rationalism agrees in effect with Paganism or negative Atheism, which if it puts up a god at all puts up one that will do no harm to its vices, as the Wise Man noted so particularly of all heathendom, that, by setting up such gods, people "look not to be hurt." [2]

* * *

Benjamin. The measuring and weighing which you criticize in Rationalism you have just approved

[1] Soph. 1. 12. [2] Wisd. 14. 29.

in matters of faith and revelation, quoting St. Paul, that we "prove" what is acceptable to God.

St. Victor. Yes, and St. John requires us to "prove the spirits whether they are of God." [1] That is the philosophical attitude which is taken up in theology. A philosophical attitude, I say. *The Tatler* a very long time ago, in fact two centuries ahead of our time, described a different attitude, that of "a young gentleman, of moderate understanding, but great vivacity, who . . . had got a little smattering of knowledge, just enough to make an atheist or a free thinker, but not a philosopher or a man of sense." You remember I quoted Thackeray for you once, who appealed to a coming comet or star, not yet arrived, as his criterion of truth, which we were to stare at or gape for, and meanwhile do—well he did not say what. If, besides the young gentleman of little understanding, and the novelist of great name, you want the poet, take the American Walt Whitman, whom an English admirer describes with warmth as questioning the existence of the Christian God, yet resolutely thrusting back despair, setting his teeth and vowing to create a new God; and this is how the poet does it, according to his admirer: "Sets your star, O heart, for ever. Yet behind the night waits for the great unborn somewhere afar. Some white tremendous day-break!"—In all these samples of thought you see no trace of the philosophical habit, which proves, measures and weighs things, and constitutes a man of sense and reason.

Nor does there seem to have been much more in the institution which a set of Harvard professors have set up as a "Laboratory for the Study of Worship." They brought together thirty children, of

[1] 1 John 4. 1.

ages from three to fourteen. Afterwards, fifty other children were admitted. These helpless little things were taught everything that any diseased mind had ever said or thought about divine worship—in the way in which you see books called *Histories of Philosophy, or Histories of Pedagogy*, pick up all the oddities of the past, and range them in a row. The children were then left to judge for themselves. Nothing was said to guide their thoughts. And the outcome among the poor unfortunates was a disorderly litter of unqualified atheists. That is no method for trying or testing things by reason. It is only making a hodge-podge of the wrong things applied to the wrong persons in the wrong way.

Benjamin. What chance has God in a life so misdirected?

St. Victor. Not even that chance which might appear on the face of Rationalism itself; for that, after all, pretends to treat of a reason competent to judge; and then, if it goes astray, does so in the abuse of its reason, not in the absence or incompetence of reason.

Rationalism, as applied to civic life, was well portrayed in the last words of a book which described strange happenings. The Book of Judges ends thus: "In those days there was no king in Israel; but every one did that which seemed right to himself."[1] That is a form of political Pragmatism in life, which would land a community by a short cut in Russian Bolshevism—finding out what suits oneself and letting the rest go, heaven, earth, God, and man's reason, things social and external, things spiritual and internal, all dismissed in favour of what seemeth good to oneself in the passing moment.

In its sentimental form, adopted by present Mod-

[1] Judges 21. 24.

ernism, Rationalism makes a rule for the divine out of one's own emotions and impressions. It is inclined to grant that some things said by God to us are true; that the written word of God is divinely revealed and inspired. But all this, explains the Modernist, is granted because what is conveyed agrees with him, makes him feel good and comfortable, on finding some resemblance between himself and the law. For a good many spineless characters show a kind of conformity with the rule of right. They are negative enough to keep respectable. They are often soft enough to be very sentimental. And things written, which agree with their mood, may well be true.

We are told in the *Theological Review* of Princeton that Luther believed in the verbal inspiration of Scripture, but this meant that he regarded Scripture as the Word of God only so far as his experience tallied with it, and he felt the thing said ought to be true. In this way the present Modernists are thinking out what the Christianity of Christ ought to be "in terms of modern thought;" and God's word "becomes true," they expressly say, just so far as they "feel" it to be true. The rest of Scripture falls with these moderns under the same ban as with the ancient Jews: "This saying is hard, and who can bear it?" [1] But this querulous and suffering temperament is not enough for the moderns. They become aggressive, and declare the Bible "immoral," as when the psalms threaten sinners with chastisements, temporal and eternal. They affirm that St. Paul is "clearly wrong at times," no doubt when he is so positive in laying down duties and rights. Our Lord's whole life and ministry, which the Jews accepted as palpable facts seen and witnessed, moderns do not accept on the authority of all Christen-

[1] John 6. 61.

dom and the whole world; but they build His sacred character up into poetry, which they would fain find in the Gospels, and into "romance" and "myth," which they professedly teach to children now as something possibly useful. Current literature is full of all this kind of thing.

You see I have followed the thread of Rationalism through various windings of religious or anti-religious systems, which take a direction from it. I have come to its sentimental form. Now I need mention only its effects on a man's interior morality.

As to a man's private thoughts and desires, his leanings, ways and habits, and all that precious activity which is going every moment to make, form, or consolidate a man's "character," this for Rationalism is a reserved precinct, with which God has nothing whatever to do either now or hereafter, either in the time of probation here, or in the court of judgment beyond. One person writes, all this is what a gentleman keeps to himself. For several centuries now, ever since the Sacraments, especially that of Penance, were laid aside, generations have been under the impression that their interior, the religion of it and the morality of it, is something which they can keep to themselves. In great institutions today where the youth of a nation is formed, it is understood as a principle, and practised as a policy accepted by all, that never a word is to be said in sacred or other instruction, by way of guiding or warning youth on the subject of internal purity and integrity of heart—that heart from which, said Our Lord, "come forth evil thoughts," and all the other foul things which He describes.[1]

Modernism declares there is no responsibility incurred by all this; no judgment is ever to be passed

[1] Matt. 15. 19.

on it. Hear this passage from persons ranking with the "pious clergy." They are treating of "Christianity and Immortality." This is what comes to be propounded: "Later Judaism roundly declared that the final destiny of man was determined at death by the character of their lives on earth; and this view, though modified by the Roman doctrine of purgatory, persisted into the middle of the last century. But, if today we accepted this theory, we could not, as Canon Storr points out, send out to the war thousands of our young men to face death, without making serious attempts to bring them face to face with Christ. 'Could we,' he asks, 'do this, if we honestly believed that their final destiny was unalterably determined by the choices which they had made in their brief span of earthly life?' We ask, can it be just to punish with eternal woe the waywardness of a few years of earthly existence?" So a man may be a libertine, a liar, a robber, a murderer; that is all only "waywardness" during a brief span here.

Benjamin. But Our Lord declares the sanction of eternal fire against such.

St. Victor. Don't you see, they have got rid of Our Lord. They despatch His teaching as "later Judaism." It is all too plain what Our Lord taught about responsibility, and eternal punishment. But they get rid of all that, as "later Judaism." Fire means nothing to them. It means something else. Just so, in the words, "This is My Body," that does not mean "body." It means something different. What words mean and the Church teaches is only a "perversion," as these pious clergymen say of the Christian doctrine on immortality; that the Christian belief in it has "sometimes been strangely perverted." Why? Because of the Church's teachings regarding "the prospect of purgatorial fires, or

the tortures of the lost." They don't like that. So it is not true.

* * *

Benjamin. You seem to speak of Rationalism and Modernism indifferently, when you quote some of those tenets—no responsibility, no free will, no commandments. You quoted some one to the effect that God no more makes rules than the sun makes rules; also the Grand Master of the Orient, Ferrari, speaking at the grave of the mayor of Bologna, that the immortality of the soul was a "nasty dogma of the Christians, *turpe domma dei Cristiani*." How are we to credit these things accurately to their proper accounts?

St. Victor. This last of the "nasty dogma" is mere crass materialism. As to the crossing and intertwining of systems on certain points, it is wonderful how they do run into one another, when they are celebrating the demise of truth, and are busy making its grave. The Rationalist and the Materialist are two extremes, in the field of body and soul, of matter and thought. Yet they come to the same on a question of immortality, or, as it is called, "survival." And observe, when they are speaking of immortality or survival, they are also implying the whole question of the soul's spirituality, responsibility, eternal reward, eternal punishment. As Young put it:

> Or own the soul immortal, or blaspheme;
> Or own the soul immortal, or invert
> All order.

Now, if you say that Rationalism becomes hazy because I run it into Modernism, I answer that Modernism is the prevalent form of Rationalism in the ideal order; just as in the materialistic run of thought it has become identified with Evolutionism.

So that, if you take your stand upon these two systems of Modernism and Evolutionism, you have the whole field of modern Rationalism laid out before you.

Pius X in his encyclical on Modernism, having called it "a collection of all heresies," went on to say: "Hence the applause of the Rationalists" for the new troop of modernistic recruits joining their ranks. In the private consistory of December, 1907, he said these words: "Bad enough that Modernists leave the Church. Worse that they stay in it! And they mount the sacred altar, and offer the Holy Sacrifice." For, indeed, their idea of Sacraments and the Holy Sacrifice is the same as that of the emotionalists whom I described; that it is all symbolic, and if it does your emotions good, well and good; if not, what difference does it make! Taking them at their word, with their "symbolism" and their double senses for every thing they say, they are as slippery as the Jansenists ever were, and seem to consider that they are entitled to remain in the Church upon their own valuation of what the Church should teach—such an idea, said an Oxford man in the Anglican *Church Times*, as is "the very essence of heresy and private judgment." They have stated a special reason for lying low inside instead of going out like honest men. They want to use some coin of vantage within to smash things up if they can. They have encouraged one another to stay in on that account.

M. Loisy, the noted French Modernist, says in his autobiography: "I stay in the Church for motives which are not in accordance with the Catholic faith, but of moral expediency." Another put it more brutally, that he kept skulking within for motives of financial expediency, till he got snugger quarters

somewhere else. Then he left for high motives of reason and conscience! Loisy explains how the whole process of his infidelity originated in a great notion which seized him, or which he seized, that all truth was relative, angular, different for you from what it is for me, so that we take it very much as we like it. It is in the sense of this sceptical fallacy that the poet says of his mind, which he calls Alma:

> She doubts if two and two make four,
> Though she has told them ten times o'er:
> It can't—it may be—and it must!
> To which of these must Alma trust?

Then everything else went by the board. Loisy discarded immortality. He said, there was no hell. He became a mere Rationalist; and, as for God, his view was that of an unqualified Pantheist. He says: "The life of man is a phenomenon, like the life of a plant. To say that a man is immortal, is to say that the phenomenon still lasts when it has ceased to be." Of course, Loisy was not such a dolt as to mean that. He knew well enough that to say a man is immortal is to affirm that the substance of the soul lasts, when the phenomenon of the bodily life has ceased to be. But he merely wanted to drive a point home. So far he was the Rationalist. Then he became the Panth ist: "He, I say, who has known the ideal under the form of the True, the Good and the Beautiful, who has enjoyed more or less purely, more or less perfectly knowledge and love—he has entered into eternity, he has seen God face to face, and he can die without fear, for he has lived enough to live always, he has written his name in characters indelible in the consciousness of the living God." And thus we leave a Modernist settling down as part and parcel of the

god-world or world-god, rocked in the cradle of his fancy and romance.

* * *

Benjamin. These Rationalists seem to fare badly as reasoners or logicians.

St. Victor. It is not our fault, of course, if they are at fault; nor is it a fault of ours if we show them up. I do not know whether Dr. M. G. Ryle in America was telling of a real occurrence or not, when he communicated this story to the *Home Herald:*— An Assyriologist came forward and propounded as the result of his observations, that we have found wire in Assyria; whence he concluded that the Assyrians understood electric telegraphy. Then stood up an Egyptologist, and argued thus from his observations: We have not found wire in Egypt; therefore the Egyptians understood wireless telegraphy. Do you want more of this kind of reasoning?

Benjamin. You expressed a doubt once before whether people were really playing truant with their good sense. You thought they might only be playing.

St. Victor. Well, here is something serious. I have it in black and white before me. Dr. Beet has an article in the *London Quarterly Review* on "Nature's Marvellous Provision for her Unborn Children," which means that, before men and animals appeared on the earth, the world was prepared for them. The whole geological series shows this. The needs of man, the development of his intelligence, and his moral training, could not have been provided for in a home better prepared. All animals found the house ready for them. Nature produced vegetable food before she produced animal life, "thus providing," says the doctor, "for the need of her offspring not yet born." That is all very reasonable, but not

to the evolutionary Rationalist. One replies, not denying the facts adduced, but desiring them to be twisted another way, so that the adaptation of the world to the coming animal shall not appear. He adduces no facts. He cannot. But that makes no difference.

He says then: Animal beings did not come into a world which they found just ready for the uses of their organs, for digestion and development. No! The way we must conceive the matter is that, when animals came in, they found the world just so, and themselves not so; wherefore they got up a lot of organs inside of them, perceptive and digestive, to suit the fix they found themselves in. They made themselves up to their environment. Hence he concludes, any argument of design, called "teleological," as if there were a creative providence making things just in order for a purpose, fails before this idea of Evolution. Here are his words: "Beings did not come into existence with an appetite for vegetables, and find to their surprise and delight that vegetables were ready to their hand; but, because the vegetables were there, the beings had (that is, got) an appetite for them." And he pleads for indulgence on behalf of this notion, in order, he says, to save "modern thought." His way of putting it is, "The teleological argument (from design) can be and must be stated, with full allowance for its difficulties in the light of modern thought." His "modern thought" could not find anything better than that! That is what Lucretius dreamed of, two thousand years ago,

> Note here, Lucretius dares to teach
> (As all our youth may learn from Creech)
> That eyes were made but could not view,
> Nor hands embrace, nor feet pursue;
> But heedless Nature did produce

The members first, and then the use.
What each must act was yet unknown,
Till all is mov'd by Chance alone.

Lord Ormathwaite suggested in his *Astronomy and Geology*, that Mr. Darwin should have adopted for an evolutionary motto the old parody on Lucretius:

I sing how casual bricks in airy climb
Encounter casual horsehair, casual lime.

* * *

Benjamin. But here a new difficulty occurs. Rationalism is the exercise of reason. Now in all this rationalism you show no exercise of reason.

St. Victor. Modern Rationalism has dedicated itself, body and soul, to the Evolutionary theory, with all the Materialism, Pantheism, Scepticism, and Atheism therein contained. Carlyle tells us that the man who launched the theory of Evolution under its incipient form of the Origin of animal Species was an atheist—that is, Charles Darwin; that Charles Darwin's father was an atheist; and that his grandfather was an atheist. Grant Allen, Darwin's eulogist and biographer, explained perfectly well the meaning and force of the evolutionary theory, which issued eventually out of Darwin's observations and his *Origin of Species*. Allen says: It is not a thing or a theory proved; it is only a way of looking at the world, of "envisaging" it, of "visualizing" it, perking your eye and your head in such a way that the world looks back to you in the way you want. He says: "Evolutionism, as now commonly understood, may be fairly regarded as a mode of envisaging to ourselves the history of the universe—a tendency or frame of mind—a temperament, one might almost say, or habit of thought, rather than a definite creed or body of dogmas. The evolutionist looks out upon

the cosmos as a continuous process unfolding itself in regular order, in obedience to natural laws." The "natural laws" here, which Grant Allen so ingenuously sets up, mean the exclusion of creation, of providence, and God. The descent of man from a monkey by "natural laws" came to be the stock in trade, the source of public interest, and the felicitous discovery of Evolutionary science. It seemed good enough to be true.

Darwin said that "man may be excused for feeling pride at having risen, though not through his own exertions, to the very summit of the organic scale." This pride, with which Charles Darwin's bosom swelled, and Grant Allen "envisaged" the world superbly, had already been touched off by Dean Swift a century and a half before, when he said that "the top felicity of mankind is to imitate monkeys and birds; witness harlequins, scaramouches and masqueraders; on the other hand monkeys, when they would look extremely silly, endeavour to bring themselves down to mankind." Gay, in his fable of the "Two Monkeys," would have us believe that they see through man's mimic pride, all put on:

> I laugh to scorn the mimic pride.
> For how fantastic is the sight
> To meet men always bolt upright,
> Because we sometimes walk on two!
> I hate the imitating crew.

Looking at mankind so, Darwin expressed regret that he had ever mentioned the word "creation," as if man might have come from the hands of God. He wrote to Sir Joseph Hooker in 1863: "I have long regretted that I truckled to public opinion, and used the pentateuchal term of 'creation,' by which I really meant 'appeared' by some wholly unknown

process." That is, all he wanted was to rid the mind of God and creation, without putting a positive idea there instead; and, with usual rationalistic integrity and sincerity, to do that by juggling with a word—saying one thing and meaning another.

All his evolutionary progeny abandoned Darwin in all the points of his original theory, but stuck to him with tooth and nail for the thing he "envisaged"; that is to say, no God, no Creator, no Judge, no soul. Tyndall before the British Association, Huxley in his *Critiques and Addresses*, Topinard before the School of Anthropology, and the others round about at different times, all admitted the mythical character of the evolutionary philosophy. But, without being able to advance a scientific reason for it, they have still professed to be sincere believers in that theory. They have lived in great expectations of a light to dawn in the future, as Huxley, advocating "Spontaneous Generation," says of it in particular: "That is the expectation to which analogical reasoning leads me; but I beg you once more to recollect that I have no right to call my opinion anything but an act of philosophical faith." When he repeated this Creed of his, he gave a chief reason for his belief. In an article on "Mr. Darwin's Critics" he wrote: "In addition to the truth of Evolution—indeed, one of its greatest merits in my eyes—is the fact that it occupies a position of complete and irreconcilable antagonism to that vigorous and consistent enemy of the highest intellectual, moral and scientific life of mankind—the Catholic Church." He admired the prevalent Positivism or Agnosticism, because it had the charms of "Catholicity without Christianity."

Time has passed; and Evolution, unproven, has become a dogma. A recent writer, E. D. Fawcett, who has published a whole book to show *The World*

as Imagination, and has found morality to be an idle narrow convention, takes up with Evolution as just the sort of creative romance which agrees with his notion of the world's being a mere play of fancy. He says of the evolutionary theory that it is a "romance at once splendid and infernal, an epic uncensored, to its artistic gain, by the narrow moral conventions of mankind."

* * *

Benjamin. Do you imply that these people have had it all their own way, when they had no reason to show, and, as you signify, not even a hollow show of reason?

St. Victor. No reason! Why, that is a recommendation! Somebody has just delivered a pronouncement on inconsistency and self-contradiction, in these words, that "the inconsistencies of a man of genius are the marks of his greatness!" To be indifferent to all the differences, to make a medley of all the distinctions, by which logic and philosophy discriminate things in this world, is according to them the mark of an "open mind," which does not take things in particular, but gulps them down all together and anyhow. It is what St. James speaks of as the "double-minded man" or "double-souled man, who is inconstant [*or inconsistent*] in all his ways."[1] It was in this way that the ancient Gnostics, who called themselves so because they "knew" things—they had the *Gnosis* or knowledge of them—gloried in their "Unknown and Unnameable Abyss;" and modern Agnostics who boast of "not knowing" things, as their appellation of "Agnostic" signifies, claim to know that there is an "Unknown and Unnameable God." It is all the plea of the "open

[1] James 1. 8.

mind," at which the Wise Man laughed: "If they were able to know so much as to make a judgment of the world, how did they not more easily find out the Lord thereof?" [1] And St. Jerome made merry with it all to Marcella, when, throwing in the parenthesis: "(*Asino quippe lyra superflue canit*, It's all lost time to be playing the flute to an ass)," he continued: If those people don't like pure waters at the spring-head, let them go on drinking the muddy stuff down yonder, and let them deny to sacred studies the diligence they apply to woods and waters, to birds and little fishes.

BENJAMIN. But they must have had something to show for themselves!

ST. VICTOR. Yes, they had two things to show, but not two reasons. Neither of them attaches to truth or makes for righteousness. One is intrinsic in rationalistic Evolutionism; that it lands you expressly, openly, blatantly, in an arboreal ancestry, to the elimination of God. The other is an extrinsic qualification; it puts you into line.

BENJAMIN. Into line! Well! Into what line?

ST. VICTOR. Into the line of fashion, following the leader in fashion and phrase! To be out of the fashion, you might as well be out of the world. And, if you don't take up with the phrases in vogue, you may sing well in reason and religion, in the pure atmosphere of nature and grace, but you are altogether out of tune with the cant and jargon of the cliques and the *claqueurs*.

* * *

BENJAMIN. And you are content with that, to let them have their own way?

ST. VICTOR. Now you know that fashions change.

[1] Wisd. 13. 9.

I add, the changes come, even when God profits by the variation; since come they must, just for the variety of the thing. In this case, a strong man was bold enough to face the crowd, to elbow his way through, and walk the other way. A most conspicuous scientist of modern times, Lord Kelvin, made some remarks at University College, London, on a lecture just delivered about "Present Day Rationalism: An Examination of Darwinism." He said, it was not true that science neither affirmed nor denied Creative Power. Science positively affirmed Creative Power. Science made every one feel a miracle in himself. Modern biologists, he said, were coming once more to a firm acceptance of something, and that was a vital principle (a soul). He affirmed that they were absolutely forced by science to admit and believe with perfect confidence in a directive power—in an influence other than forces physical, dynamical and electrical.

Upon this declaration of Kelvin, it is wonderful how all the intimidated and cowed votaries of fashion recovered their breath, or had it taken away. Lord Reay observed that "it was a grand thing to hear that prince of science, Lord Kelvin, give his testimony on behalf of religion." *The Spectator* chimed in, that this declaration had been so unexpected to the great majority of people, who had been afraid; but now they were afraid no longer! Indeed, it really seemed as if it was the other side that began to get intimidated. The director of Kew Gardens, Sir W. Thiselton-Dyer, wrote to *The Times* complaining, that Lord Kelvin, said he, "wipes out by a stroke of the pen the whole position won for us by Darwin." Possibly this botanist was irritated by the anecdote which accompanied in *The Nineteenth Century* the report of Kelvin's view; it was that Liebig

talking with him, some forty years before, had said, it was "as impossible to evolve a plant [*by chance*], as to write a book on botany by chance."—But in all this observe the helpless, shiftless way in which people looked up to and followed the leader—pretending the while that they were scientific, and were following reason! In fact, it was Lord Kelvin himself who said, that applied science was now chiefly a matter of weighing and measuring, and beyond that of collecting and collating masses of small detail. It is shop-work, and not reasoning at all.

As to the amount of science on the subject of man and the ape, hear the tone of patronizing assurance in the following passage, which shows how the popular mind has got infected with the popularized dogma about the monkey, without necessarily knowing anything whatever of the subject. It is only the reviewer of a biological work that is speaking, and he says: "Many people seem not quite to have got over the shock of learning their relationship to monkeys, and to be afraid of fresh revelations." Then to explain the wonderful revelations of design, order and intelligence in living things he does not bring in God as having designed anything, but he gives free will to every piece of living matter. He says: "Darwin postulated the raw material . . . and this raw material, as later discoveries in mutation have shown more clearly, is constantly making new experiments." Darwin's original Darwinism of blind selection and accidental survival to account for organic species has disappeared—no creative or providential design having been admitted—and now we come to his followers asserting the very contradictory, that is, a free will and a designing intelligence in all animals; assigning these attributes to the creatures themselves, "as genuine agents, sharing in their own evo-

lution"—but, of course, never crediting such attributes to a Creator!

* * *

Benjamin. Could anything be more spicy than what you quoted from Lord Kelvin about miracles—that we are living miracles ourselves?

St. Victor. Here he was using the word "miracle" in a loose sense, to signify a great wonder. Sir Oliver Lodge, a gentleman not remarkable for his Christianity but high as a scientific authority, has spoken of miracles in a strict sense. Addressing the Free Church Council, he said: "The possibility of what were called miracles had been hastily and illegitimately denied. They were not necessarily more impossible or more lawless than the inteference of a human being would seem to a colony of ants. They should be judged by historical evidence and literary criticism. Often, in the history of science, reality has proved simpler than our conception of it."

Like miracles, which were to be ruled out once more with the exclusion of the Creator from His creation, moral virtues also, which the theology of Reformers had already eliminated from human life by the dogma of predestination and the denial of free will, were to meet their doom again at the hands of science. Darwin explained luminously what charity is, and how it came to us—what that charity is, which has been taken to be the highest of moral virtues, and the supreme ornament of humanity's bosom. He pointed to its origin and to the models of it, in the line of his own descent from dumb brutes, and in the ramification of his relationship with cousins german because of that asinine descent; that is, he pointed to dogs licking one another, oxen similarly, monkeys ditto. There is the evolution of charity.

BENJAMIN. But you explained on a former occasion that the analogy of likeness among things does not show their origin. Matter is always like itself and therefore acts in similar ways.

ST. VICTOR. Logic is of little avail with these people. Here is one writer, who expounds the origin of the rattle in the rattlesnake. He says that many serpents are addicted to making a rattling noise by vibrating the end of the tail. Wherefore he concludes that the modifications of the organ, visible in some snakes, came into being by dint of wagging; and thus the tail wagged the animal into the possession of a nice set of rattles.—That style of argument, in every shape and form, runs through all evolutionary literature from Darwin down to our time.

Would you like to have a Frenchman show you how to put the cart before the horse? One, Élie Faure, has just been enlarging on the subject of Catholic cathedrals, and how such marvels of art came to be. He has explained that it was not the Christian Church or Catholicity which gave the idea of the cathedrals, and executed it through the Catholic masons, but it was the cathedral which gave the idea of Catholicity and Christianity to the Church; and thus, says he, it is the masons of France that have made France Christian.

BENJAMIN. Impossible. How absurd!

ST. VICTOR. Well, let me give you his exact words: "We credit a religion with the glory of the cathedral; whereas it is the cathedral which has imposed on us the form under which that religion comes to us. If Christianity has been what it has been, if it has made us what we are, it is because the old masons of France have willed it so. *Nous rapportons à une religion la gloire de la cathédrale qui nous a imposé la forme sous laquelle cette religion nous atteint. Si le*

christianisme a été ce qu'il a été, s'il nous a faits ce que nous sommes, c'est que les vieux-maçons de France l'ont voulu." An Englishman's comment on this theory reaches the Frenchman's own level. He calls it a "convincing paradox," and he approves of the idea that "the cathedral was built in spite of the Church, which has no more exclusive claim to it than to the other elements in the 'architectural symphony' of the age." It is a wonder that the Englishman and the Frenchman did not come out more plainly still with the idea in their heads, and say at once that the credit of all the Catholic cathedrals in Europe is due to the freemasons! But you see what an exalted idea of the Church in the Middle Ages has forced itself into these narrow minds, when they must distill such jealousy and envy, and must serve the product out with such crudity and grossness, in order to pilfer her glories!

Do you want any more of this *hysteron-proteron*, as they say in learned phrase; that is to say, of men putting their cart before the horse to go forward on the road, or putting their donkey on their shoulders to ride over the bridge?

* * *

Benjamin. Mr. Belloc has it, that we Catholics are the heirs of all the arts, and the guardians of all traditions. Whatever Europe has to-day was made possible for it by the conservatism and developments of Catholic Christianity.

St. Victor. Would you believe it? In America particularly, all those ages of formative Christendom have been heretofore a blank. Just as there was a style of education, a generation ago, which made of history before the American Revolution very much like a clean slate with nothing written on it, so

among those who even profess to be learned, the Middle Ages which were the Formation of Christendom have scarcely come into view. They have not been found out, either in arts or science or philosophy or theology. For the want of at least some few grains which mediæval logic could have given them, it is not so strange that we should have such trifling and fumbling with sense as you saw in the case of the cathedrals.

Here is one, a professor of philosophy at Princeton University, who publishes a book on *The New Rationalism*, and professes to form an estimate or to criticize "opposed philosophical systems." Now there is one system, the Scholastic, which held the mind of all Europe for centuries, and in substance held the field till recently in the Protestant part of Europe, as it governs the whole mind of the Catholic world. It is the philosophy of Aristotle and St. Thomas. But the American philosopher has scarcely discovered that system, and shows himself incompetent to give an intelligent view of it. As it has been with the history and the philosophy, so is it with the theology of Christendom, which escapes being taxed for contributions to a great mass of theological literature pouring out year after year. It is all owing to a policy summed up in the fable of Hans Andersen, who tells of the ants' debate. They sat in solemn session on the question, whether their ant-hill was not the highest thing in the world. Overhanging them and overshadowing them was a great beech tree. But no one of the orators made any allusion to the existence of the giant outstretched over them. Their own little ant-hill was the biggest thing in the world!

If putting the cart before the horse will not effect what is wanted, or if the affectation of ignorance and the figure of preterition or momentary distractedness

will not serve the purpose, there are many other resources available. One specimen of sleight of hand at logic is worth noticing, for it is fashionable just at present. It is a favourite with the clergymen of a Modernist Church Union.

You may not remember, for it was perhaps before your time, when some people prayed suppliantly, and others said arrogantly:—Well, if the statements of Scripture are true, regarding the Flood, the division of tongues, and other such events, why have we no statements in other records to corroborate Scripture? It is true that even then believers could refer to many points in pagan mythology which offered a plausible degree of corroborative evidence. But lo! with the appearance of cuneiform inscriptions, the Assyrian bricks, the Egyptian papyri, and other funds of archaeology, pleasant things are appearing. It would seem that we had found some part of what we desiderated. Here is the corroboration! Not at all! is the Modernist reply. The Dean of Lincoln put it plainly at a reunion of his kind. He said: We know now where the Scripture accounts were taken from! The story of the flood and the ark of Noë were taken from the Babylonian folk-lore! So that the corroborative and independent evidence itself is abruptly vitiated and turned by a sleight of hand into a second-rate collusive copying by the Bible of some pagan record.

The fact is that accounts of the Deluge appear in various parts of the ancient world—which of itself, as being the fact of a general tradition, is proof enough that a real event of former times lay behind it. Nothing securer than tradition for passing on a fact, however badly tradition may have come to pack the fact up. A tradition is not liable, as a document is, to being burnt, mislaid, torn up. It is very

slow in getting extinguished and lost to view. The play of children is known to preserve traditionally some precious records, which could serve a purpose if other monuments had been destroyed.

But, when the accounts of the Deluge appear over the ancient world, Rationalism does not see at all that such a fact proves anything. It changes the view at once, and for the fact substitutes the question of a fiction. It asks, Which of these stories was copied from the other; and which was the original story? Sir James Fraser, of Trinity College, Cambridge, has just published a big work called *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament*. He discusses at length what he and other rationalists call the "legend of the Flood." It is true that he considers both the Greek account and that of the Indians to have originated independently. Some Persians, professing the Magian religion, admit the fact of the Deluge; though others do not. Now all that is very satisfactory, and should meet the Rationalist's desire, no less than the Christian's, for proofs outside of the Bible of what the Bible contains. Not at all! replies the Rationalist. For Sir James Fraser states that "in Africa, including Egypt, native legends of a great flood are conspicuously absent; indeed, no single clear case of one has yet been reported." There is the triumph of the rationalistic negation—in some places the account has not yet been found! Says one of the school gleefully: "Thus the assertion, sometimes found in apologetic literature, that all nations have retained memories of the Deluge is shown to be baseless"—to wit because, though found so universally, its records have not yet appeared in Africa! What can you do with minds made up in this way; particularly when they bring their errors in by a side-wind, and talk of *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament*, implying that

the Bible, far from being the Word of God, contains an assortment of old stories, from Babylonia, Chaldea or Egypt!

How caricatures and side-play of this kind do delight the rationalistic mind, which always rings true to the necessities of the case! Its case is that it must find a basis for naturalistic life, which knows no God. As rational animals cannot do anything satisfactorily without a show of reason, we are treated by the rationalistic mind to all kinds of mental manoeuvres and exhibitions, scarcely agreeing with one another, but all disagreeing with the truth.

So, Benjamin, dismissing Rationalism, we may close with a statement made at Cambridge, Massachusetts, when Mr. Wilson, then President of Princeton University, and subsequently President of the United States, addressed the graduates of the Theological Seminary at Harvard University. He said: "To my thinking, the Christian Church stands at the centre not only of philanthropy, but at the centre of education, at the centre of science, at the centre of philosophy, at the centre of politics; in short at the centre of sentient and thinking life. It is nothing less than the plan of life, and man's relation to the plan of life. To reveal God to man [*you must*] reveal God to them in their own spirits, reveal God to them in thought and in action, re-establish the spiritual kingdom amongst us, by proclaiming in season and out of season that there is no explanation of anything that is not a spiritual explanation, and that man cannot live by bread alone, cannot live by scientific thought alone . . . that digestion of this dry stuff which he takes into his mouth is not possible, unless it be conveyed by the living water of the spirit."

* * *

BENJAMIN. I am not sorry to have done with what the President called the "dry stuff" of Rationalism.

ST. VICTOR. That is your parting salute, is it?

> In your eye there is death,
> There is frost in your breath
> Which would blight the plants.

But do you want to run the risk of something worse?

BENJAMIN. What can that be?

ST. VICTOR. Its outcome Naturalism; which, however, can come out of many other things just as well, out of Materialism, Scepticism, Idealism, Atheism. They all discharge their waste products of thought down the incline of Naturalism, with a morality to match. Do you know what Heathenism is?

BENJAMIN. The same as idolatry.

ST. VICTOR. Yes, but heathenism is wider than the idolatry which worshipped stocks and stones. It takes in the idolatry which worships theories, romances and notions. There was Comte with his Positivism, the same system which Huxley admired as "Catholicity without Christianity." Comte did not acknowledge God; and so set two hemispheres agoing in the line of Agnosticism. But he had an elaborate cult all the same. His was the worship of "humanity." Man is *Le Grand Etre*, with Guardian Angels, Sacraments, and all the elements belonging to a great being amassed round about him. However, in the system of Positivism that cult is only an incident.

There are other cults, which give the name of religion as a substantive character to a number of sects or denominations, though the concentrated essence of all the religion that is in them comes to a certain amount of moral entertainment, sometimes

political discussion, of a Sunday. Would you believe it? Atheism itself, or the denial of God altogether, has equipped itself with a cult or worship, as if it were a religion. A form of it, which was expounded in the *Système de la Nature*, apportioned to Nature, and her three daughters, Virtue, Reason and Truth, the character of being the only adorable godheads. You recognize here, no doubt, the voice of our latest Modernists, who are always crying out from the parliamentary tribune and the editorial sanctum that there are three things in this world which satisfy religious aspirations—the three harmless abstractions of the Good, the Beautiful and the True. As to a Person, they do not want Him at all, neither Himself, nor His laws, nor His eternal sanctions of rewards and penalties for the doing of right or wrong. In fact, all this Atheism, as Plato stated in his *Laws*, is only a disease of the soul, which wants to give the passions their fling. Then it becomes an error of the understanding, which tries to bolster vice up with some show of rhyme or reason. The French Revolution was atheistic enough. Yet it set up a cult of Reason in the midst of its blood and iron.

Hence, as every system seems to have its cult or worship, and a good many are clearly heathen though they do not worship stocks and stones, the question recurs, what is Heathenism?

* * *

Benjamin. Let us say then that heathenism is living without God in this world.

St. Victor. That is heathenism in practice. Its supplement is the theory, which consists in giving oneself short weight and short measure, as if a man took insects or apes for his standard of living or his criterion of morals. We cannot do so. What these

things have or have not is no measure for us; as a pious person said to blind Didymus, consoling him, that he should not rate himself as happy or otherwise by the possession or privation of what mice, flies and lizards have,—the sight of one's corporal eyes,—but he should measure himself by what he had in common with the Angels, the power to see God and have the light enkindled within.

You see how the heathen spirit is essentially one of deprivations; which foregoes the privilege of a divine origin and destiny, and will imagine an origin down in the lower orders, to excuse itself for living on a par with its real origin. Thus, from the point of view which Evolution takes, you rate yourself zoologically as an animal that has got reason somehow—as some one expresses it, by "pulling at one's own boot-straps" and so rising in the world. For both mind and body provision is to be made. The body is craving for perpetual support, replenishment, warmth and clothing. The mind has a sense of its own needs, and craves for knowledge, affection and enjoyment.

Now, if you want to be a heathen, you will stop just there. You will squeeze yourself and all you are or ever shall be into the measure of those limited facts, as a sufficient base of operations for you, and as the complete plan of life which you mean to live. No Personal God, your First Beginning, your support in life, and your Last End, is to be admitted. As Allies expresses it well, the heathen will get and give to his body every indulgence in food and material gratifications. He will, of course, include all those which, following St. Paul's instruction, we do not care to name or think of. He will affect to be unashamed; and possibly will become so if he continues on his course long enough. To quiet his mind

and to still its anxieties and fretting, he may satisfy the desires of an intellectual existence, and acquire knowledge, aim at distinction, strain for power, gratify affections, and make others the instruments of his pleasures. The most universal means for compassing all these objects are material resources and wealth. Hence the heathen mentality will fasten on riches as the means and measure of the rest. With some minds that have succeeded in squeezing themselves down to the requisite degree of narrowness, wealth will be not merely a means but a positive end of existence. They do not spend money on life; rather they spend life on money; just as some do not eat to live, but live to eat. Of all people, they are the ones who understand the intensive culture of existence, on that model of theirs, the Oriental prince, who learning that he had only six years to live determined to double his allowance; and he did so, by spending nights as well as days in eating, drinking, carousing and all the rest of the performances.

Ede, bibe, lude, post mortem nulla voluptas,

"Eat, drink, play; no further chance of a fling after death!" That was Sardanapalus's epitaph on himself. But do you see the other epitaph of the old Roman inscription inserted in that wall opposite:

Domus æterna, Nemesis!

"Your eternal home, Vengeance!" Both epitaphs are from heathen times. But the former is heathen in spirit, which the latter in part corrects.

*. * *

BENJAMIN. Does not what you say come to Indifferentism? I know a person who has made it a point to go through life comfortably and gaily, and to keep

himself unruffled by any religious considerations. A favourite observation with him has been: "I was a Catholic till I was old enough to think for myself," which epoch of his intellectual existence was somewhere about the age of sixteen. Now, I must say, he is in a fright. The time to think for himself seems to have arrived. The shadows are closing around him, death is visibly approaching; and he has no mind to die. There is a lady here of similar antecedents, who now will not submit to the thought of death, nor to the idea of an operation which might save her life.

St. Victor. You see how dear life clutches at the strings of the heart; and the "joy of living" is exploited for all that is in it. The "joy of living!" That was the expression of an invalid doctor, who longed and yearned to live still; but he had to go; in fact, he killed himself with the drugs which he thought would give him a lease of life. "Splendid innings!" was the phrase of a noble earl recently deceased; he was describing the life he had spent; but he too had to go, and like a candle he went out. Many used to haggle with death—before drugs were invented to smuggle them pleasantly out of life.

> "I give and devise" (old Euclio said
> And sighed) "my lands and tenements to Ned."
> "Your money, sir?—"My money, sir, what all?
> Why, if I must"—(then wept) "I give it Paul."
> "The manor, sir?"—"The manor! hold," he cried.
> "Not that—I cannot part with that!"—and died.

The Christian, at the opposite pole of things from the Indifferentist, does not haggle with death, but trades with life. "Trade till I come," said the Lord.

Benjamin. But really what you described as Heathenism seems a comfortable kind of life, to go on quietly and be healthy, and have enough of mental and social exercise to be always moving round.

St. Victor. Meanwhile, shutting off all supernatural providence or reference to God from the orbit and guidance of thought and conduct, with plenty of doctrine and plenty of dogmas, all to the purport of denying a divine religion. You hit the nail on the head when you identified my Heathenism with your Indifferentism. East of Suez, where the Moslem reigns, is the right place for all this; as Lefcadio Hearn showed in his life and morals. But, west of Suez, with all its hampering conditions of respectability and what is called the "conventions of morality," more than elbow-room enough is found for genuine heathenism. Do you not see the humorist going about the world frolicking to make a joke of everything from the fez of a Turk to the manger of Bethlehem, from the law given on Mount Sinai to the Gospel of St. John? And his books are sure to be rated among the Hundred Best Books in the world, and he himself is one of the "great men" in our time. You see the learned and comfortably housed "downy doctors," as Young calls them, who find two of the Gospels to be poems, and the other two not very different; who quote Renan on Holy Scripture, and Mazzini on Holy Church, and any "venturesome" writer on Christianity, if he will only say new things and startling things. Nay, here is some one who talks in a serious publication of religion and faith as a "venture," which you go "betting" on.

Carry any of these Naturalistic doctrines and dogmas out into the social or political world, and you are landed in Secularism, which will have nothing to do in practical or public life, in the family or education, with any other form of religion except that of some superstition, as we see to-day in the prevalence of Spiritism. Ethics or Morality has long since evaporated.

Benjamin. And why so?

St. Victor. Because Morality, which Ethics expounds, is your relation to the Person who is your last end. If you have no Personal last end, you have no law nor guide but yourself—no light above, no light around. When all the candles are out, all the cats are grey. What is there in the world, if God is not there? And, if you will not have Him in practical life, what is He and His law to you? And, if you will not have Him, He will not have you. The lights of heaven being put out to your sore eyes, you too go out into the utter darkness. That is the end of it; but not the end of you.

Where else should you go to, if as they say, in the effort to bolster up this heathenism, you are only a conscious manifestation of the unconscious or "subconscious?" You are a mind invested with delusion; you are thought and nothing but thought, with no personality to be responsible for the thinking; you are the one and only mind which is, or part of such a mind somewhere. You are an evolution of the eternal mind, a spark of the divinity. With all this there is no free will to be admitted; no knowledge of God; no conscience. You are mortal, though, taken in a heap with others, you are the immortal God. You are all will; but it is the will of the human species, not your own at all. You are the divinity, but hopeless misery.

All that is the mask of Idealistic systems. If you want the masks afforded by Materialistic systems, you may start with Feuerbach and "humanize religion."

* * *

Benjamin. You said that one of the charges against Christianity itself was that of being too

human in its form of prayer and worship; that Christianity is called "anthropomorphic," bringing God down to the likeness of man.

St. Victor. Oh, yes! But with the anti-Christians one wing is always contradicting another wing. They are always contradicting themselves. That is the fatality of falsity, from which nothing can save it, not even the "long memory" which is prescribed as a safeguard against exposure. So I say, you will "humanize religion" by doing away with the supernatural, with all that is supersensible, on the ground that creation is only the notion of priests. Here you get into "priestcraft," don't you see? This humanized religion affirms that asceticism, or the systematic exercise of virtue as a means to attain salvation and perfection, is something damnable; it is a sin against nature. It is remarkable how active the Modernists just now are on that track of eliminating salvation from the Christian Creed. Here are a couple of lay preachers, who propound, that "it is egotism which persuades a man of his salvation;" for what he desires "is salvation and not to see the Kingdom of God. Seeing the Kingdom would make him forget salvation." But what on earth is this "Kingdom of Heaven?" One answers fairly: "Reality is the Kingdom of Heaven, and you must see that if you are to know reality."

Benjamin. But what does he mean by that?

St. Victor. I suppose what all Materalists mean, opening your eyes and seeing things, and seeing nothing beyond. That seems to be the reality; for another Modernist chimes in: "The putting off to another life in another world of the hope of the Kingdom, and the realization of its conditions, is perhaps the greatest apostasy that the history of religion can disclose."

Benjamin. I heard a Catholic inquire whether it was not "immoral" to shorten life in the effort to practice virtue; and he used the very word "asceticism."

St. Victor. He had only picked the idea up in a newspaper or some social circle, without ever inquiring of himself whether the practice of virtue shortened life, or the practice of vice lengthened it. But, to resume the "biological" thought, or Lower Criticism of the Materialists, they say that the godlike in man is free nature; free desire unchecked; the right of nature to have a fling in life—or where shall nature ever have it? You see how exactly we are in what is called "Naturalism."

This habit of mind, and professed system of thought, declares that the supernatural, or religion, is only the sacredness of human relations; for, say they, all relations between human beings are in themselves "religious." *Homo homini deus;* "Man is man's god," particularly in the matter of sensuality. It was possibly in this connection that a certain profligate French novelist was entertained in London as the chief guest at a banquet, and was complimented by one of his kind there as being "*divinement sensuel,*" in all that he wrote. In this profanity, you see the "sensual" was coupled with the "divine." With the Materialist, you will exclude, of course, whatever does not come under the observation of your eyes or instruments. The secret force called a vital principle or soul has no place. Free will does not exist. All that is old enough. But, with Büchner, you will declare that religion under any form, either of Christianity or of heathenism, is but the decadence of backward people; just as Trotsky and Lenin, the Bolshevist dictators in Russia, pronounce religion to be the opium of the public; and commissioners of

theirs charge a good fee for the privilege of being allowed to enter a church and worship.

The last word of materialistic science has been pronounced on Darwinian principles by the acceptance of man's evolution from an ass or a monkey; and Haeckel has declared that an asinine evolution is very much preferable to creation by God, as much so as an enterprising ass is a nobler forefather than a decayed Adam. The morals of humanity are "biological" like the rest; and the manner of their evolution you saw in the example I gave you from Darwin, of dogs and monkeys licking one another, and showing us the origin of human benevolence as well as of divine charity. One ardent zoologist comes forward just now saying that all these notions, moral and the like, can be fixed "by considering whence and by what paths we ourselves have come." Our life, he says, and the life of all mankind is guided by this conception of origin. And he adds: "The dominant human race of the future is likely to spring . . . from one of those, whom we are accustomed to consider as lower"—than even the asses and the apes.

Benjamin. This is getting more and more terrible.

St. Victor. But you understand that I have a chapter and verse for each statement, if you challenge me. I merely add that the Modernist wing of the Anglican Church chimes in with the tenet that any Creed, which pronounces a sentence of damnation on any of those vices and sins, catalogued and denounced by the prophets of God and by St. Paul and by Our Lord Himself, is itself a damnable Creed; or, as a professor of history, I think, in Cambridge, called it, is openly "mendacious"—the reason apparently being—though the connection was not clear in what he wrote—that the Athanasian Creed, which affirms eternal damnation for the sinner, says:

'Whoever does not hold this faith, entire and inviolate, shall without doubt perish for ever." Now this professor doubted, in fact held the opposite. Therefore the Athanasian Creed was "mendacious;" for he certainly will never go to hell, if he can help it. Hence these points have now been expunged from the Athanasian Creed; or the Athanasian Creed has been expunged as a necessary part of their liturgy. For, as a Frenchman said long ago, there are certain truths which are too brutal, *des vérités brutales*.

When religious thought and morality are utterly dead you arrive at the ultra form of what you called Indifferentism. The American Society of Psychical Research issued some years ago a set of questions, to which they received over 3,000 answers. One inquiry was: "Do you feel the question of a future Life to be of urgent importance to your mental comfort?" To this 1,807 persons replied, "No;" many added, "Not at all," "Never think of it," etc. The others, 1,314, amounting to 33 per cent of the persons replying, spoke of the future life as having a profound effect upon their conduct.

* * *

Benjamin. So this is what it all comes to—a negation: Indifferentism and Secularism.

St. Victor. Particularly in the great battlefield of the present, Education. M. Viviani boasted from the French tribune, that they had put out the lights of heaven. You see this is the malignant form of infidelity. It snatches up the orphan children of those who have fallen in the great war; and refuses to provide religious instruction and formation, because, says the official Secularism, "the Republic is neutral." In the French Chamber some time ago, M. Raffin-Dugens who had been a teacher, dilated on the

subject of Viviani's boast, that the lights of heaven had been put out, and said cheerfully there shone "still three on earth—the Good, the Beautiful and the True." Then he went on to say: "If there were question of discussing God in the school—". Here M. Buisson complacently interrupted, and directed the orator's attention to the point, that of course no such subject ought to be mentioned in school. In this spirit of malignant pugnacity, which is the bigotry of infidelity, Voltairian ladies, whether French women or English living in France, make it a point of honour to be assaulting the purest and holiest of their sex, the religious women who teach in convents. One, an English woman, Miss Betham Edwards, praised a French woman for prowess in driving another nail into the coffin of the conventual system. The English authoress herself, a novelist by profession, expressed a fervent hope that after the great war every vestige of convent education would be completely abolished.

It might serve to make amends for all the errors and license and extravagance inflicted on you under these last two heads of Rationalism and Naturalism, if I record a more chivalrous approbation of what religious teachers, and especially women, have always been effecting in the young. It will be an offset for the relief of our feelings.

* * *

Benjamin. The lot of religious teachers seems very much like that of Truth, which you said pleased nobody, or, at least, very few.

St. Victor. And for similar reasons. But, as to the estimates:—There is a passage in Marion Crawford's *Corleone*, where he speaks of a character in these words: "It is extremely doubtful whether any

male writer can, by the greatest effort of imagination, clothe himself in the ingenuous purity of thought and intention, which is the whole being of such a young girl as Vittoria d'Oriani, when she first enters the world, after having spent ten years in a religious community of refined women." Whether this American gentleman when he wrote these words had already entered the Church, I don't know. But the truth of it has been a matter of domestic experience with us at every turn.

BENJAMIN. A point people make much of in relation to nuns is the melancholy, the closeness of conditions and life, the imprisonment, and so forth. Walter Scott and Longfellow come to our remembrance here.

ST. VICTOR. Yes! But happily, to speak only of our days, it is too late now to be raking up this offscouring of Protestant Alliances, and such institutions. Hysterics and exaggeration, and all the other bees that have buzzed in their bonnets are, indeed, as old as Luther and Lutheranism. But, not many years ago, a certain Protestant gentleman, Dr. A. E. Bridger, in a book on *Minds in Distress*, says that for a series of years he attended several communities of religious women, and amongst them he never witnessed any trace of hysteria. He quoted to the same effect the experience of other doctors. He concluded: "I am certain, therefore, that a well-directed, pure and high type of love" fills out the character of the sex. To this physical effect of divine love, and of an ascetic and austere life on the person and character of women, this same doctor adds another point from his experience: "Not only is hysteria rare among nuns, but among no other class of women have I found such gaiety, content, and generally sound mental and physical equilibrium."

A survey of our ways and methods in elementary education was taken by a writer in the *Westminster Gazette*, Mr. H. W. Nevinson, who began his review by asking what a pagan mind at the beginning of Christianity would ever have thought of this new religion; and then proceeded to describe what he himself had felt on watching the working of Catholic schools.

A Greek of the second century, he said, or a northern Teutonic barbarian, must have experienced a curious surprise when he lighted on some early Christian home. "There at least he found a peculiar peace, a confident serenity, an almost womanly consideration for the wants and weaknesses of mankind. He perceived that from the hour of birth to its final departure upon the long but hopeful journey to God, the Christian soul was comforted and encouraged by the words and ceremonies of a plain and beautiful symbolism. A guard had been set at every gate by which the unseen powers of covetousness, presumption, sloth and despair, might break in and assault the human spirit. To every phase of common life a kindly sympathy was extended, and to the very uttermost the living soul was never excluded from the hope of victory in the long spiritual contest of existence."

Then the gentleman turned to the school in particular, and said that "it is the same in the Catholic school of to-day. From morning till evening the children are surrounded by the plain and beautiful symbolism of protecting and merciful powers. The Crucifix hangs upon the wall; the Virgin, with flowers round her feet, watches them like a mother more beautiful and considerate than their own. Three times a day their prayers go up, and three times a day they are instructed in the definite teach-

ings of the Church, so reasonable and satisfying that I think every one would wish them to be true. When you see the children beat their breasts at the words, 'Through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault;' when you hear them repeat the 'Hail Mary,' and remember that the first part of it was made by the Angel Gabriel, and the second by the Church so long ago; when you hear them instructed that the oppression of the poor is one of the four sins that cry to Heaven for vengeance—it is not difficult to understand why the ancient Church has maintained its hold upon humanity, and in most European lands always continues to be the Church of the poor. For the poor do not reason more than other people, but they suffer more."

This writer continued: "In the catechism, which is the base of the teaching, the children are given not only the doctrines of sin and prayer and forgiveness; they are given a rule of life and a form of daily exercise." Here he illustrates with points of daily observance, as that of modesty in retiring to rest, of prayer on beginning the day; how they are to make the sign of the Cross, and say some short prayer, such as "'O my God, I offer my heart and soul to Thee!' Thus the child passes into life, believing himself to be attended by powers and defenders which most children, I think, would like to have with them, and many grown-up people too."—This good gentleman who observed so much, did not notice at all the central duties on which all the rest of Catholic life is pivoted, that is to say, the steady reception of the Sacraments, Penance and Holy Eucharist, which pour in the grace to maintain the purity, integrity and richness of religious vitality.

Chapter XX

GOOD FAITH

Benjamin. I am glad you come back to the beaten path, leaving the land of paradoxes and contradictions. It is a little remarkable that things so familiar and natural to us should make such an impression on an outsider.

St. Victor. Yes, a vital religion so full of faith is a beaten path, but only to those, whose Christian heritage has made their minds, wills and sentiments connatural with things above in the supernatural. It is not at all a beaten path for such raw material of minds and hearts as you have been analysing. Raw material, I say. Consider what kind of temper there is in the mentality and even the physical being of those, who in the line of their ancestry and heritage have not for centuries received the grace of reconciliation with God in the Sacrament of Penance, have never shared in the divine refection of the Holy Eucharist, have never been taught how to turn and return to God by an act of inner sorrow for sin. Much rawer still is the material of human minds and hearts, if persons have not received the Sacrament of regeneration by Baptism. They belong to a different world.

St. Jerome uses that term, "raw," speaking of the first generations which entered the Christian Church, and referring to that pagan world which had to be recast, remoulded and reformed. He says that the service of women in the Church was reserved by St. Paul to widows of 60 years of age,[1] because he

[1] 1 Tim. 5. 9.

was instructing through Timothy, Bishop of Ephesus, the "rude" or "raw" material, of which the Church at the beginning was made up: "*Quia rudem Christi instituebat Ecclesiam.*" This agrees perfectly with the policy of missionaries in the countries of the infidel; they estimate the first generation of converts as altogether unfit for the priesthood. And not only the same policy has been applied in other parts, not strictly infidel; but the principle of it has shaped canon law, and created certain impediments regarding priestly ordination.

The *personnel*, or raw material, which we have been contemplating, has a stock of Christian language, because it occupies the ground of what was once Christendom; it has breathed in an atmosphere more or less Christian, and has conceived Christian ideas, because of the antecedents past; just as the Platonists and Stoics of imperial Rome began to adopt Christian talk and thought, because of the Christianity then breaking like a vision upon the world. Both classes, those who enjoyed the vision before them, and these who see it dissolving in the past, have made free with Christian ways as Orientals do with European clothes. But the "delicate Sabbath" of the Lord is not for them. Their speech betrays them, as it betrays you; for you and they are almost of different races. Hence, my dear Benjamin, you need not be surprised if, among other results of such differences, the genuine Christian is a marked man, as being not of the world; if he is persistently revealed by his manner of talking, and acting, and deportment generally. You are in the same condition as St. Peter, who following Our Lord was seen through quite distinctly. The servant girl said so: "Thy speech doth betray thee." If you ask why, I answer with the magnificent definition which one

of the St. Cyrils gives of a Christian, that he consists of "body and soul and the Holy Ghost." And there is no concealing that combination. Body and soul are too transparent with their purity, simplicity and intelligence to hide that light, as if they were mere crockery, like Gideon's pitchers, meant only to screen the lamps within.

* * *

Benjamin. Good Faith, I suppose, will stand people in good stead, and save many souls.

St. Victor. What do you mean by good faith? You will have to unravel the word. Freemasons in Brazil are under the ban of the Church, yet you see them trooping devoutly to walk in a procession on Corpus Christi. A man will devote his life to conducting literary enterprises against the Church, her doctrines, and authority, but he will come forward to hold the tassel of a canopy over the Blessed Sacrament. You may be edified by the sincerity of the man who ingratiates himself with you by repeating that he belongs to "Holy Roman Catholic Apostolic Church," but who, a little while after, shows you the account of his having been married to a Jewess in a Presbyterian church. Now, in all these cases and a multitude of others, you will find an officious charity or indolence, not very remote from Indifferentism, flaunting the rag of "good faith," to cloak the bareness of the transactions. We may add to the credit of a certain French professor of ethics, that he does not seem to have invoked the plea of "good faith," when he said plainly that his cleverest scholars were the biggest rogues.

Benjamin. A person I could name to you said, he would never disturb one who was in good faith.

St. Victor. We may assume that such a person had neither position, nor authority, nor responsibility

of any kind, to effect the damage which he was meditating. Such a policy as that would have left the pagan world still pagan till our day. We should have been born of pagans if the diet of the world had been that, where there was no Christianity, there no Christianity should be preached; but people were to be left in their good faith. Was not the pagan world in good faith? And many pagans acted according to their lights. So God excused Abimelech in a certain circumstance: "I know that thou didst do it with a sincere heart, and therefore I withheld thee from sinning against me;" but henceforth he was to act as one who knew better.[1] Among the Revelations of St. Bridget there is one, where the Blessed Virgin said to her that in pagan lands there were many elect of the Lord; that Rome, far back in the time of Romulus, founder of the city, had been favoured with the presence of many good and just souls, who loved God the Creator of all things, and sought as best they could to serve Him. If these were pagans, it was because they could do no better. There was no one to preach and to teach them the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But, when the fulness of time came, no good faith was an excuse for withholding the truth and the light from them. So what do you mean by good faith?

* * *

Benjamin. As to the fact of good faith subsisting, there can be no doubt. You have given us those instances. Then we are told by converts, that, before they actually entered the Church, they had never entertained a doubt regarding their religious position. And this is made much of to show that good faith exists outside of the Church.

St. Victor. No doubt of it, as long as it is good.

[1] Gen. 20. 6, 7.

Those who followed the kindly light leading them, as soon as the darkness was shot into by the rays of twilight, are precisely samples of good faith having done its work in its time, and then merging into divine faith. Had they been recalcitrant to the light, then they would have exhibited the phenomenon of bad faith. Good faith turned bad cannot be held up as an object of respect. Nor can good faith at all be regarded as an ideal state in any shape or form; for it only connotes error, which happens not to be imputed. Adrian the judge, condemning Christians wholesale to torments and death, is no object of reverence or admiration, however honest he was. But Adrian the judge, touched by divine light, and stepping down from the bench, declaring himself a Christian, and then condemned to be scourged till his body was torn open, with his lower limbs broken by bars, and finally his hands and feet cut off—he was a specimen now not of good faith, but of divine faith. So too those others, who appear annually in the Martyrology, the comedians mimicking Christian rites of baptism and the like, then suddenly enlightened to become Christians, and laying down their lives; as also the notary, who could stand no longer the registering of martyrdoms, and became a martyr of Christ himself—all these cases are facts of good faith, with possibly no interval in those sincere minds between the dawning of the kindly light and the springing of their hearts to follow.

Benjamin. Then it is for you to define what this good faith is, which sheers off from bad faith on the one side, and is apt material for divine faith on the other.

St. Victor. I say that *bona fides*, or good faith, is the habit of mind in which a person does what seems good and right, suspecting no law to the con-

trary, which would limit his action in the premises. It has no conscious sense of a certain sly ignorance, which feels that one ought to know better, but takes the advantage of not knowing better in order not to learn. The honesty or sincerity which attends the ignorance of good faith is the same as that which attends any good work, with the difference that when you plead good faith you are implying the work is not good, but erroneous and wrong, and is only just excused by the pardonable ignorance involved. Whatever is wanting in this sincerity of believing that you are doing the right thing, is sinful and is imputed: "*Omne quod non est ex fide peccatum est*, All that is not of faith is sin." [1] A Protestant divine of an older date, Dr. South, defined good faith not infelicitously, when he said, that what a man "continues ignorant of, having done the utmost lying in his power that he might not be ignorant of it, shall not damn him." This description, however, is too restricted; for it seems to be regarding the case where there is a latent consciousness of being wrong, with a practical incapacity of getting right. But, consciousness or no consciousness, the essence of good faith is honesty and sincerity, that one acts on his lights to know the right thing and do it. Otherwise the smouldering embers may look innocent enough; but there are fires burning beneath.

Incedis per ignes
Suppositos cineri doloso,

"You are treading on treacherous ashes, which bank fires underneath."

* * *

Benjamin. An instance of good faith would be, I suppose, those lamas of Thibet whom you described once. They shut themselves up for life in a cell,

[1] Rom. 14. 23.

where immured for 30 years or more they devote themselves to contemplation. I am sure they must reach a high degree of prayer and divine union, however mistaken their notions may be.

St. Victor. If they are mistaken, they have not yet entered the temple of truth; and they must first cross that threshold to reach the grace of divine faith, without which there is no union with God in high prayer. For high gifts of contemplation are only the exercise of true faith, with hope and charity. Once inside the temple of God's truth they might then make their way with due humility to the apse of God's Church, where Cherubim fold their wings in prayer, and contemplation floats over the altar.

Benjamin. But they have a good intention, and God supplies.

St. Victor. Yes, as God supplies in all other cases of good faith, and that is exclusively to bring them by humility, sincerity and purity of heart, to the right faith.

Benjamin. They show great character; and they must have grace for such a life.

St. Victor. Grace they have to the same effect as all others in their condition, that they come to know the truth, and that the truth shall set them free, with the franchise of every other divine gift put then within their reach.[1] For then they will have brought themselves within reach. As to showing character, there is nothing in that. The question is upon what the character is shown. If the story is true of the pea-shooter and Alexander the Great, it must have shown a character of infinite patience for a man to learn how to throw little peas through the eye of a needle. But, when the performance was exhibited to Alexander the Great, he is said to have

[1] John 8, 32.

turned on his heel bidding them reward the man with —a bag of peas!

BENJAMIN. Then what does it all come to, if they have grace and nothing comes of it?

ST. VICTOR. They have grace that something may come of it, to find the truth, which shall set them free.

BENJAMIN. And to support them in those high efforts.

ST. VICTOR. To that one effect, of finding the door and entering the Church.

BENJAMIN. But so many are in the soul of the Church.

ST. VICTOR. You mean they are not in the body.

BENJAMIN. Not to be in the church's body—does that mean to be deprived of those high gifts and graces of the Church's soul?

ST. VICTOR. It does not mean that good people are deprived of them; for that would imply that they have a right to them, while souls are still outside instead of being inside—as if they could have *res columbae extra columbam*, says St. Augustine, the things of the Dove's nest outside of the nest, the things of Christ's household outside of Christ's house, which is His Church. The Church does not go out to those who are not in. God despatches grace by her messengers to bring them in from the high ways and the by-ways unto the nuptials of the Lamb in his Church, where He is always wedding souls. All that those who are not in can aspire to is to get in; and, for that, the supreme blessing which comes to their door is to know of it: *Fides ex auditu*, Faith coming by hearing. Then the Lord comes from Libanus, and His light breaks from the dense shades of the mountain. And souls are ever flocking, and marching to the same hymn of faith: "Come let us go up to the

mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob, and He will teach us His ways, and we will walk in his paths." [1]

* * *

Benjamin. That gives me quite a new idea of what is meant by the privilege of being in the body of the Church.

St. Victor. There are not two Churches of Christ. And don't imagine that what is meant by "good faith" means anything more than I have explained. It merely excuses as long as ignorance is excusable and guiltless, but not a moment longer; for it turns then into bad faith. Great efforts have been made by religionists or pietists to haul this "good faith" in everywhere, and cover over with it, as with a tarpaulin in rough weather, all kinds of things. "*Pecca et pecca fortiter*, Sin and sin stoutly," said Luther; but only "hold on to Christ" the while, with the persuasion of faith; and that will do all the wonders of good faith. It will excuse, he affirmed, and what you do will not be imputed. And he quoted the words of the psalm: "Blessed are they whose . . . sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord hath not imputed sin." [2]

Going on the strength of mere probabilities is not good faith, if in things essential you take your chances of running against a law which it is necessary to observe. "Oh, I never thought!" whines some one when he is caught. But that is a capital sin, in all matters of peace and war, not to have thought! It has cost many a general his commission, and some, their heads. It has cost many a man his peace of conscience, and his place in time and eternity. Every fool is supposed to understand such

[1] Isai. 2. 3. [2] Ps. 31. 1, 2.

dictates of common sense as are put up by the Traffic Committee in London: "Look before you leap," "Always look both ways," "See and be seen." "Is it safe? Always play for safety," "Who hesitates in the road is lost."

There was one who had paused and dallied and played with the truth in life; and the human respect which had pursued him followed him unto death, and he played with the truth and dallied; and at last, taking the outstretched hand of some one near, he said, "I'll take my chances!" and he died—riding out into the realities of a dark eternity as if it were a shadow-land of fancies, fays and sprites. If I may quote Walter Scott:

> Wonder it seem'd in the squire's eyes,
> That one, so wary held and wise—
> Of whom 'twas said, he scarce received
> For gospel what the Church believed—
> Should, stirr'd by idle tale,
> Ride forth in silence of the night
> As hoping half to meet a sprite.

Benjamin. You are evidently alluding to heresy.

St. Victor. Well! You know what heresy means. The word is Greek, meaning "choice," "option." In the New Testament it signifies the choice of self-will in the matter of truth. And, as such a choice sets up a faction, it means a "sect." But you cannot go choosing and picking at truth. You must take it as it comes, whether in principle or in practice, in theory or in fact, in speculation and in life. Life itself, which is to be directed by the truth you discern, is to be accepted on the terms on which it is offered and given. Beggars are not choosers. You cannot take the light of truth as you would take chocolate or ice-cream, and then drop it for something else;

nor can you go rollicking about the world, frolicking in the quest of truth and pretending never to find it, in order to keep going like a Wandering Jew or a Flying Dutchman. This style of restlessness is what Henri Poincaré appropriates as the specific note of a heretic. He says: "The faith of a savant is not like that of the orthodox who draw on the need [*we have*] of certitude. We must not imagine that the love of truth is the same as the love of certainty. . . . No! The faith of a savant would rather resemble the restless faith of the heretic, that which goes seeking always, and is never satisfied. *Non, la foi du savant ressemblerait plutôt à la foi inquiète de l'hérétique, à celle qui cherche toujours et qui n'est jamais satisfaite.*" You may remember that I quoted for you once Lessing's profession of deliberate and final perseverance in ignorance, as the very ideal of a rational life; that, if the Almighty offered him in one hand Truth and in the other the Search for Truth, he would respectfully but firmly wave the Truth aside and take the Search for it instead. What do you think of grubbing for the sake of grubbing, with the malice prepense of never finding?

Are you surprised at what St. Paul says: "We see that they could not enter [*into God's rest*], because of unbelief." [1]

* * *

Benjamin. Why is heresy said to be the worst of all sins?

St. Victor. Because it is falsehood. It is what St. Paul calls "pseudonymous knowledge,"[2] or a knowledge called "Gnosis" by the Gnostics, when sailing under false pretences. Now falsehood intercepts all rational connection of the mind with God, who is Truth; and thereby it cuts the very ground from

[1] Heb. 3. 19. [2] 1 Tim. 6. 20.

under all moral virtue or morality, which is precisely the connection of the heart with God, by leading unto Him. The first thing for a man to do is to apprehend God, and to apprehend Him as He is, not as He is not. If that is not done, a beginning is not yet made of the way to one's last and only end, in the quiet of repose. Do you expect to flutter in eternity shaking hands with nothing? The first thing to do, in apprehending the "substance of things to be hoped for," is to approach God, and "believe that He is a rewarder to them that seek Him." [1] This is apprehending God; just as our prehensile organs of the body take up their matter and food. If you do not take it, you must go without it. We are not dummies of the automatic type which the modern philosophies are trying to make out of God and man—in Him no "creative freedom," in us no moral freedom.

Benjamin. But don't say that heresy does not deal with God. No man is a heretic except in relation to God and divine things. Hence heresy fetches a man towards Him some way.

St. Victor. Yes, just as you can square up to anything, call it by a false name, "pseudonymously," says St. Paul; and make a fool of yourself. You get nothing by asking for a person at the wrong address. Some contumaciously do so. Others not contumaciously; it was their ancestors who cut off the divine connections with these unfortunate children, left at the wrong door. This does not mean that any one shall ever be punished except for his own contumacy, as God tells us so forcibly by the mouth of Ezechiel.[2] But it does mean that they may be suffering from intellectual penury, or may be stumbling about like mutilated creatures, owing to the wantonness and contumacy of others. There was the formal

[1] Heb. 11. 1, 6. [2] Ezech. ch. 18.

heretic first, who knew what he was doing; and there is the material heretic afterwards, who started life at a disadvantage, and only half knows, or does not know at all. You notice there is a gradation in what Our Lord affirmed, that the servant, who knew the will of his Lord, and took upon himself to flout it, shall "be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.[1]

Benjamin. The Prime Minister a while ago when he arrived at his destination in Wales said in a great religious speech, that he had seen the streams in the valley of the Conway as he whirled by; and all those streams, coming from divers springs, flowed into the one ocean; and in like manner all ways of religious thought paid tribute to the one religious truth.

St. Victor. The streams that pay tribute to the ocean of truth are the streams of truth. No falsehood is a stream of truth. And, if any part of falsehood does honour to the truth, it is that portion of truth on which the falsehood lives; for without truth perverted it cannot even come into existence, as without revealed truth no heresy could be.

From Simon Magus down, from Gnosticism and Manicheeism down to the latest heresy, what are they all playing on except the truth? The Gnostics, or "knowers," styled themselves by that name, precisely because of their assumed *Gnosis* or Knowledge of truth. The Frenchman Poincaré, whom I just quoted, identified his faith with that of the heretic, and in doing so he called himself by the very same name as the Gnostics had assumed; he styled himself a *savant*, which is the French for "knower." Like so many other systems, ancient Gnosticism is

[1] Luke 12. 47, 48.

reproduced to-day by savants as the latest outcome of "modern thought." For the Gnostics, you must know, were very spiritual. There was no material body, shape or visibility to their worship; since matter, according to them, came from an evil principle; but they were all spiritual and angelic coming from the hands of the good God. Thus there could be no Sacraments for Gnostics, no organized means to get lifted up, no tools; since all these elements of human life, of its worship and work, implied some use of matter, which according to them was evil. Indeed they claimed no grace of God, since their nature was too perfect to need any. When God enlightened them with their sublime *Gnosis*, or "modern thought" of those times, He was only giving them their due, in order to recover for Himself the divine influence so lavishly expended on them. Professing a hatred for the visible world, since it was wrapped up in matter and came of the evil spirit, these "knowers" dribbled away into distinct classes, chiefly two. The first made a show of exaggerated asceticism, of which, we must confess, there is no trace in our moderns. The other class was that of the open profligates, called Antinomians. These explained that all things sensible and outward were a matter of indifference, of no moral value one way or other; and that mankind should fly in the face of any Being, who by promulgating the laws of the Decalogue was trying to put a yoke on mankind.

So it was with the Manichees, against whom the Ecumenical Council of Nicea inserted in the Nicene Creed those words, that God is the Maker of all things "visible and invisible, *visibilium omnium et invisibilium*." With these people too, matter was an evil thing. There were no Sacraments. There is to be no Resurrection, for the material body is as bad

as everything else material. The Old Testament was the work of the evil spirit; there was something true in it, much that was false. The New Testament was the work of the good God. But, like the Gnostics, the Manichees also manipulated the sacred text as they chose, since, they said, it was full of errors; and hence it needed expurgation at the hands of these third-century higher critics no less than it receives from the higher critics of the twentieth century.

* * *

Benjamin. What you say seems to have a modern ring about it, judging by so many passages which you have quoted.

St. Victor. A modern ring! Why the press of yesterday is still reeking with such stuff as being the very latest products of modern thought. You know how spiritual every thing and every one must be. Any material exhibition of worship or religion is completely out of form. You know how there is no need of God's help for anything, because as one writes just now on "The Law of Self-Respect," "we are infinitely valuable to Him, who is the Author and the Giver of life"—which either implies with the Gnostics that we are too perfect to need any adjustment, or that it makes no difference to Him, whether beings clean or unclean enter His bosom. In this case, He is nothing else than the evil principle or spirit of both Gnostics and Manichees.

As to the promulgation of the Ten Commandments, which was referred by the Gnostics to the evil principle, we have it on all sides now that morality is only "conventional," that morals come only through Christianity, which is called "institutionalized religion," and that all "repressive laws" are "antiquated," and subject to "abolition."

As to the hacking at Scripture, while assuming it to be more or less the Wórd of God, that practice of Gnostic "higher criticism" is going on at a merry rate with their twentieth century "modern thinkers." They cut up the text into Johannine, and Pauline, and other kinds of theology. Then they slice St. Paul into many disjointed pieces, wings and members. Then you have such language as the following, which comes to hand in a biography: "He was especially attracted by that side of Paulinism which has provided Protestant theology with most of its texts." It is pretty much the same process in theology for extracting strange things with the Gnostics from the Bible as in politics is familiar to statesmen, who gerrymander districts to pocket votes by means of manipulation. Moses and the Pentateuch have been sliced beyond recognition, the foundation of the process being that the lawgiver used different records in compiling under the divine direction the one record which he put together.

Which set of "modern thinkers" do you imagine yourself to be listening to, when I report these tenets, that St. Matthew's Gospel is not his; that the writings of the other Apostles are not theirs; that these documents were the productions of unknown authors at a later date, and were compiled from hearsay and half-Judaic fiction? These are the tenets of those "modern thinkers" the Manichees, fifteen centuries ago; who also favoured the world with various apocryphal screeds instead of the Gospels and Epistles. You see what Modernism comes to, whether of the 3rd or 20th century. Gnosticism dealt in Agnosticism or the Unknowable, for it posited an Unnamed and Unknown Abyss. But it did not reach what the latest Modernism presents us with, under the name of "Christian Agnosticism,"

where both St. John and St. Paul are made out to be Agnostics. Listen to this: For the Christian, "life eternal is a present possession; and he is content, for the rest, to be an Agnostic with St. John, when he says, 'Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be'; or with St. Paul, 'Now we see through a glass darkly, now I know in part.'" The writer says, that with regard to faith the Christian Agnostic has to "make the venture;" that, as to immortality, "he must 'bet' on it, or against it;" and, as to what he calls "spiritual values," the Christian Agnostic " 'bets' on spiritual values."

* * *

BENJAMIN. This is awful!

ST. VICTOR. Well it is all there! A serious writer apparently, in a serious publication! Apparently a serious writer, I say. For remember, we are speaking not only of Good Faith, but of Bad Faith. Either explains the other. And so you can explain other Modernistic tenets, as those of Porphyry, a Neo-Platonist of the third century after Christ, and seemingly an apostate, who derided the eternity of damnation, Holy Scripture, and prophecy. Or take the thoroughly Modernistic doctrine of Celsus in the second century, that the religious and moral teachings of the Christians were borrowed from extraneous sources, and are corrupt. Or take the theorem of both Gnostics and Manichees, that brutes have reason like men. Well, it is true that the animal intelligence which beasts have they know how to use and do not abuse like men.

What people have been doing with the sacred documents of the Old and New Testaments, slicing them up and down and across, to get, as that writer said of St. Paul, a "side of Paulinism which has

provided Protestant theology with most of its texts," the very same have they done with persons and biographies. They slice the subject up for a purpose. Here is a French work on *The Intellectual Evolution of Saint Augustine*, by Prosper Alfaric, of which the tenor is that the saint was first a Manichee, then a Neo-Platonist, then a Catholic, and then, during the last thirty years of his life, he was no longer a Catholic, but had become a propounder of "Augustinism." It is by this manner of slicing that, as you know, Macaulay finds in St. Teresa the makings of a Protestant fanatic, and in St. Ignatius of Loyola the cut of a John Wesley.

You can do anything by slicing, when you have a purpose. And what is the purpose? To haul the tarpaulin of good faith or bad faith over a number of things, the names of which are distinctly given in the catechism and in Holy Writ: wilful doubt, resisting the known truth, the hypocrisy of a seared conscience, the cowardice of human respect, the seduction of evil men that grow worse and worse, the forging of errors, the foolish and old wives' fables of people who are ever learning and never coming to a knowledge of the truth, and who meanwhile capture other silly people, laden with sins. St. Paul describes the lot.[1]

The satirist, too, enters his protest against them all:—

> Shall not my fable censure vice,
> Because a knave is over-nice?
> And, lest the guilty hear and dread,
> Shall not the Decalogue be read?

So what do you think of the so-called "good faith," which takes its chances, trusts to luck, has its fling, and, when the time comes for the soul to go, plunges

[1] 1 Tim. 4. 1, 2, 7; 2 Tim. 3. 6; Isai. 45. 16.

into the "unknown," as an acquaintance of mine did at Coney Island. Without ascertaining where he was, he dived head foremost into some three feet of water, and broke his neck, notwithstanding his right intention and perfect self-deception, that all was right there, plunge as he might—an assumption which will make no shallow water deep, nor deep water shallow. He was a good Catholic, however, and we buried him solemnly. But here is one who addresses himself to Death, and challenges at the same time both Heaven and Hell with a leer and a sneer, signifying that it makes no difference to him, whether he breaks his neck or not for all eternity. He says, giving a rough version of lines from another source:

Time's up, old shipmate Death . . .
Fill high thy poisoned cup; 'twill brace us well.
We would—such fire burns fierce within the brain—
Plunge down the gulfs, be Heaven our port or Hell—
Plunge down the unknown gulfs, to live again.

* * *

Benjamin. No! Did any one ever say that?

St. Victor. Anybody? No! Not anybody, but somebody, one that was no fool, the way this world goes. He was no fool till he died a little while ago. He had worked his way up from a sheer nobody to sitting in the House of Lords as a real somebody, and that by dint of such ability as Our Lord noted in the steward, who was wiser in the affairs of this passing life, for getting, keeping and getting on, than the children of light are in their own affairs which pass not away.[1] For you know the awful seriousness of the matter is worn off by treating everything as a joke and a game, with

[1] Luke 16. 8.

Smiles by shallow worldings worn,
To grace a lie, or laugh a truth to scorn.

Or, as the Wise Man said in his day: "Yea, and they have counted our life a pastime, and the business of life to be gain, and that we must be getting every way, even out of evil." [1] And, even where occupations are not openly iniquitous or blasphemous, still you notice how utterly useless are the bagatelles, literary, dramatic, biographical, or simply the merest fiction and romance, with which people fill their precious lives, year in and year out. "And they have said to God: Depart from us." [2] The Greek word here for "Depart," is "*Aposta*," from which we take our English word "apostate."

Benjamin. That lady from South Africa, who is so grateful for having received the gift of faith, says that her uncle, now seriously ill, observed to her once: "I wish I had your faith. For me, death is a leap in the dark."

St. Victor. Trusting to luck, eh? Good faith, no doubt! "Plunging down the gulfs, be Heaven our port or Hell!" Fiddle-faddling with life! In the second year of the great war a Reorganization Committee of scientific men was appointed, which in its report made this observation: "To trust to luck is a mark of the dangerous complacency bred of ignorance. The evidence of those back from the front makes it clear that, as of old, our 'people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.'" A man will not trust to luck in a railway station; but will take the word of the commonest railway porter to make sure of the right train, and give a wide berth to the wrong one. When the knowledge of the Lord and His will hath covered the earth as the waters fill the sea, and when eternal destiny depends upon a man's

[1] Wisd. 15. 12. [2] Job 21. 14.

decision regarding his dear life and soul, then trusting to luck, that a man may possibly find the right thing in any of the latest shams, is only the complacency of reckless ignorance, which after death no afterthought can possibly make right. For the man is gone, and there is no court of appeal or high cassation. "What man dost thou dig it for?" asks Hamlet of the gravedigger. "For no man, Sir. What woman then? For none, neither. Who's to be buried in't? One that was a woman, Sir; but, rest her soul, she's dead." That is why, after judgment, there is no reversal of a state of things gone for ever.

Or, may be, your affectation of inquiry after truth, your cutting cards on the question of immortality, your "betting" on it and on "spiritual values" as we heard the "Christian Agnostic" say, is only the mania for something new, craving for the latest edition if you are of the *mobile vulgus* or herd, and producing it if you are only the mob's leader that "know your public," as one said gravely. Or it is simply the superciliousness of criticism, high or low, which pretends to know, and therefore will not hear of damnation, nor salvation, nor justification, nor even creation at the beginning of all—let alone Christ and His kingdom! "How long dost thou hold our souls in suspense?" snapped the Pharisees, addressing Our Lord. "If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly."[1] He had told them a dozen times, in a dozen different ways; and they affected to be inquiring still.

Or the excuse for always inquiring and never finding may be the pretense that error is possible, and hiding in the bush of doubt is excusable. There may be a lion in the way.–But there is no good faith in all that. It is not the kind of faith a man shows in his life of common sense. In his parents' house, or any body else's, he does not put up the plea that forsooth

[1] John 10. 24.

it is possible, that perchance it is probable everything is wrong there, or something may be wrong, till he has seen for himself that all is right down to the kitchen and the cellar, and has poked in everywhere up to the ceiling and the garret. People proceed on just the opposite supposition, that all is right, that parents and friends and hotel-keepers and railway men know enough, and are good enough, to show goodness and intelligence in what concerns you and them. It is only when people put off the rules of common sense that God is assumed to be neither good enough nor wise enough, and must be taken some other way.

Chapter XXI

THE FACT AND DEFINITION OF RELIGION

Benjamin. How dull our perceptions are, how low our vitality that while such things are at stake behind the veil, while great and precious promises are ours, and nothing more is needed than faith, hope and charity, to carry all away, good measure, pressed down and shaken together, still we go moping and creeping along!

St. Victor. That sentiment agrees with what the poet says:

> Shall pagan pages glow celestial flame,
> And Christian languish? On our hearts, not heads,
> Falls the foul infamy. My heart, awake!
> What can awake thee, unawak'd by this:—
> "Expended Deity on human weal"!
> Feel the great truths, which burst the tenfold night
> Of heathen error with a golden flood of endless day.

But the fact that we are such mopers and creepers is precisely the reason why we have such a long trailing life granted to us. Angels despatch their affairs, as they settled their destiny, with a glance. Our forces are divided and subdivided down through the atoms of a material compound. Everything about us is enclosed in material conditions of movement, step by step; of time, which is the measure of movement, as it creeps onward and forward through space; of imagination which is only the painter of a material creation; and of a language which is en-

tirely a pensioner on the images of a bright fancy. In a material world everything goes by pieces, in pieces, in parts. We ourselves are done up in parts which, when highly specialized for a particular work, are called Organs. Things, place, time, circumstance are all put in our hands. Yes, and we are put in their hands. And, when we lift our heads high because we tax the material world for everything, we are proclaiming our slavery that for everything we have, for the bite we eat, and the flax we wear, and the matter and form of our poetry and eloquence, we are indebted to the dull clods about us and above us, away to the things that shine in the sky and help our weary eyes to look up a little. There was never a truer setting in which to mount a prayer, and mount by it to God, than that in which Abraham encased his petition for the doomed cities: "I will speak to my Lord, whereas I am dust and ashes." [1]

Being thus always and everywhere like the dull clod which, with the vital seed in it, issues in a beautiful rose-tree, in a fertile peach, or a towering oak, we mount even to prayer, which is intercourse with the Most High. But we retain the conditions of our material being; for the matter which is in us is a real constituent cause of us, and, though we are not that matter, neither are we only a soul. A man is something different from both, resulting from the union of the two, matter and spirit. So the highest efforts of our intellectual life are never unaccompanied by material images. We pray in images; we express our worship in the sensible beauty of liturgy; we give utterance to sentiments, grave or gay, in the strains of song and the intonation of the sounding organ. In Spain the children dance in joy before the Blessed Sacrament; and, in other countries too,

[1] Gen. 18. 27.

there is the graceful dance of the pilgrims as they move towards a sacred shrine. For the expression of sentiment by movement witness the majesty of a solemn Mass; and in the expression of sentiment by mystic quiet what can surpass the sermon in stone of a gorgeous cathedral, except Nature's own cathedral in the temple of the world?

So with everything vocal, tangible, sensible, but withal vital, quick and significant, being either a sign of higher things, or like a Sacrament actually conveying things divine into our body and soul, it is no wonder that the Apostle speaks of us as God's house, and His temple—the Church, visible and palpable, of the living God.

And thus, though we are such dependants on a world of matter, and though in what you have called our creeping and moping life we go wandering with our wits, even at the most sacred times and in the holiest places, still we are the central piece in the universe, and the pivot on which God's providence over all things is hinged. We do not depreciate ourselves therefore, as the old Manichees did, to have a free fling with the passions of so vile a principle as they pretended their body to be. Nor do we extol ourselves with the ancient Gnostics, or this modern one who says—listen: "Men win to heaven, not because they have killed their passions, but because they have cultivated their understandings."

Benjamin. Who says that? A Modernist?

St. Victor. Yes, floundering in Materialism from the high pretensions of Gnosticism, and affecting both extremes in one sentence, from the loftiness of cultivating the understanding down to the franchise of wallowing in fleshly passions. We, on the contrary, sum up the true life of matter and raise it to its high level of intensive development, in such mode,

measure and order, that the supernatural life of the soul can take its spring and rise to higher things—taking and giving, receiving in a human way the dispensation of Christ's grace, and dispensing that grace in turn, listening to the speeches of God and speaking them to others. Thus our soul and body, making an individual humanity, are a branch engrafted in Christ, receiving His divine sap and producing delicious fruit—a fruit which is owing chiefly to the sap, but is credited to us. Cut off from this divine life what should we be good for? Only a vine-branch lying about good for nothing, says the prophet, not even for making a peg of to hang a vessel on. It is just fit, says he, to be cast into the fire. "I am the vine, you the branches," [1] saith the Lord.

* * *

Benjamin. When one reads of such high mystic gifts as have been showered on some friends of God—take Blessed Angela di Foligno—he may wonder why poor little things, capable of being raised in like manner, should be kept off and out on the fringes of those great supernatural realities.

St. Victor. Because in those extraordinary cases it is God who has manifestly picked the soul up to work such mystic effects in it. But He prefers to see not what He can do; rather what we can do, what poor little dust can rise to, and how the feeble but industrious creature goes about things. That is why He seems to be so quiet, so distant, in His own creation, which is here to develop on its own lines, and perhaps at the cost of failures.

Benjamin. The cost would seem to have been heavy in the development of religion, if we have come to Darwinism at the end of it all.

[1] John 15. 4–6; Ezech. 15.

St. Victor. But a profound and wide-reaching truth, which any one can run and read, shines out conspicuously from the history of religion among mankind; that, not only in matters altogether supernatural, but in those plain points concerning God which reason could have ascertained, it was clearly necessary for the human mind to be aided and instructed by a divine revelation; that, in plain matters of morality and human life, things have been looked at by human reason in a way quite out of proportion to the realities, and under aspects subject to all kinds of perversion; and that, as a consequence in history, few indeed, and they only after long research, and then with the admixture of many errors, have been found competent to detect and communicate truths, which reason of itself should have discerned.

Now do you want the facts of the case? And the definition of religion? From the facts and the definition the law itself will stand out plain; for the facts alone speak volumes, however little Modernists like them.

Benjamin. If you make clear to me these elements of the question, I will act on the suggestion which you made before; I will pass them on. Take and give, you said; give and take!

St. Victor. First, Prayer, which is a prime exercise of religion, has been offered all over the world. You have only to consult learned books to see how it was offered by American Indians, ancient Babylonians, Buddhists, ancient Egyptians, Finns and Lapps, Greeks, Japanese, Jews, Mahomedans, Romans, the Teutonic tribes, Thibetans.

You see the importance of prayer, and why it stands in the forefront of Religion? Because it is the first moral effect of religion in a man. And you might as well expect a light to be lit and not to shine as

have the substance of a thing without its first effects. A substance must come clothed in accidents. And religion, which is an intellectual and moral attitude towards God, must come vested in an expression of some kind towards Him. Otherwise you have what St. Paul signalizes so distinctly, as the substance of piety without the "dynamic power" of it—"having a show of godliness, but denying the '*dynamis*,' the [*working*] force of it." [1] And, if you want to know what religion comes to, when it is only a "show" without working effects, he is quite liberal just there in describing the sham of such a show; he speaks of the "blasphemous, bloated up, proud, petulant," and a dozen other ragged edges to such a threadbare thing. The substance of religion with its sentiment of personal worship clothes itself in prayer and a liturgy as naturally as a tree clothes itself in foliage to breathe by, and enjoy the light and air.

* * *

Benjamin. A sentiment of personal worship, which runs out into prayer, implies some idea of the kind of person you are praying to.

St. Victor. That is the second fact; or rather the more intimate substance of the same fact—the idea entertained in all nations of the Being to whom prayer is addressed. In the oldest forms of religion spread over the world, the intellectual ideas which they yield up come more or less to the following elements:

A distinction between the visible world and the invisible, between what is natural and what is above tangible nature's ways;

A sense of dependance on a higher world, which latter does not depend on man;

[1] 2 Tim. 3. 5.

Belief in a supreme ruling and governing Power, who is Lord of the world, and Master of life and death;

Belief in mysterious spirits and beings, some of them tutelary and beneficent, others hostile to man;

Belief in the soul, and in its survival after death;

Belief in a future world, which we shall enter through death;

A moral sense of the difference between good and evil; also instincts of justice, responsibility, liberty, duty and modesty; the implicit or explicit recognition of a conscience;

Practices and restrictions imposed by a moral end kept in view;

A definite system of worship: prayers, gifts, sacrifices, rites, ceremonies and symbols, as expressions of submission, penance, thanksgiving or petition;

A priesthood, originally vested in the heads of families, that is, in fathers and patriarchs; then carried on by the elders of tribes, by seers, by priests deputed to perform sacred functions; then by the same, organized into classes;

A distinction between what is sacred and profane, as affecting persons, places, objects, words, etc.;

The organized and permanent maintenance of family life as a religious and social centre, with attempts to preserve racial purity as much as possible by stringent rules about ties of blood, marriages, etc.

There, Benjamin, you have a summary drawn up by Monsignore A. Le Roy, in his *Religion of Primitive Peoples*. You have here classified that residue of truth and practice which was common to all the ancient forms of religion, when the accretions of superfluous mythology, superstition and necromancy, have been segregated and cleared away.

Benjamin. What a multitude of questions come

to the tip of one's tongue at the mere mention of many points!

St. Victor. And what a multitude of things to say about them all! But let us keep on our line, to reach the definitions of things. When St. Paul told the Athenians that God, having made the world, did also make all mankind of one first parent, it does not appear that any pundits present laughed at the idea of that single origin, as they did laugh soon after when he mentioned the glory of the Resurrection.[1] The modern types of those Athenians laugh at both extremes, our origin and our destiny, and at all that goes between—as at some kind of a huge joke—counting life a pastime.[2] But, be that as it may with them, observe the relevancy of this oneness or unity in our origin.

For the beginning being thus one in productive fertility, a principle of likeness governs all that follows. *Simile generat simile*, Like begetteth like. Not only the great components, body and soul, are renewed in all, and not only the specific powers thence resulting, the faculties and senses, which manifest the stability of the species, are repeated in all; but the very curl of a lip, the cast of an eye, the curve of a nose may be perpetuated as individual characteristics through generations—so imperative is the law that like begetteth like, and tries to do so in the veriest accidents.

Then evidently, as the principles of all education show, the same means will meet the same needs of development, as canvases need be treated only in the same way to render them just right for any painting, for a Transfiguration or a Madonna, for a sage or a warrior. In things essential to life and well-being, body and soul need be treated only on similar

[1] Acts 17. 26, 32. [2] Wisd. 15. 12.

lines for all—just a few touches of the brush, a few Commandments, a single sacred history to show God's character, a carillon of psalms running through all the notes of feeling in the circumstances of life, an "Our Father" to fix the bearings of every human soul towards its Creator and the Lord of all. As each individual has his own private destiny, this too receives a similar treatment in God's supernatural providence. Venerable Bede observes on those words of the Lord: "You are the light of the world"; it is the Saviour, he says, who lights the lantern; we do but supply the crock or sconce of our human nature, "*humanae testam naturæ*" which He fills with the flame of His Divinity.

You see what comes, in both physical and moral life, of the great principle enunciated as the Unity of the Human Species—the same which St. Paul proclaimed in the Areopagus at Athens.

* * *

Benjamin. And yet all so different, in spite of unity!

St. Victor. Do you think they stayed at home, beside the patriarchal hearth? *Audax omnia perpeti: audax Japeti genus!* cries Horace in an ode, which runs down the audacity of being ready to face everything—the audacity of the race of Japheth! and in that ode he records from tradition the proclivity of men to run about everywhere, to assault heaven, to leave no treacherous sea alone but they must invade it with their "impious barks."

On occasion of the great confusion of tongues caused by their assault on heaven at Babel, and on all occasions under the impulse of movement and adventure, the young bloods launched forth in all directions. They had a great empty world to take pos-

session of. By a similar process, on a much smaller scale, and certainly not into so empty a world, the lads of colonial Canada, the *coureurs de bois*, and the young sparks of the English colonies, the trappers, disappeared beyond the borders, and then were found in many cases to have obtained adoption in the Indian tribes, with their families growing up completely Indian. In the beginning, there were no tribes there to adopt adventurers or wanderers, but these latter became the tribes on the outskirts of the old settled humanity, and beyond. Some of them may have been completely submerged in the destitution and hardships of their solitudes. But when, by their skeletons, tools, and marks, they emerge from obscurity into the story of mankind as deciphered by anthropology, they are spoken of as "prehistoric." History looks back at them over its borders.

Here it suits a class of speculators to consider these "prehistoric" people, who flit darkly in the early twilight of things, as being in no way correlated with other nations, who never merged in the obscurity of dark continents. That would suit the idea of Evolution, when it does not want to consider all men as coming from one, but should wish to see them dropping anywhere from the branches of an arboreal ancestry; just as, in another mood, this Evolution dispenses with arboreal ramification, and wishes to find the biological lines starting up everywhere by what is called "Spontaneous Generation." That is, in answer to the question, where and how things came to be, the answer is returned: They grew!

But, all these extravagances apart, the comparative study of these peoples, and notably under the aspect of religion, is only an inquiry about how far they preserved the original deposit of knowledge and

practice, which they carried with them from the common stock; and then how they modified and corrupted that original inheritance. We try to unearth the tragic history of centuries.

Other peoples, extending from Egypt to India, seem never to have passed out of sight, as we see first in the Bible, the premier historic monument of the world, and then in other records. They were nations never "prehistoric," although periods in their history do not come directly within our ken. One of them, that is Egypt, became for the rising western nation of Greeks some such aid to culture as a university is to inquirers in our times. The great men of Greece travelled for their intellectual development, and Egypt was their chief resort. That alone would suggest points of contact with the sacred deposit of truth belonging to the Jews.

Among the Greeks, those refined reasoners, whose counterpart for subtlety of acumen would seem to be in modern times the Celtic nations on the coasts of the Atlantic, arose the great philosophers of antiquity. Philosophy is the knowledge of things by their ultimate causes. It is the only knowledge which is science in its full sense, which satisfies the mind and which, remarkable fact of Christianity! is the very first draft of knowledge given in the catechism to the child's opening mind: Whence it comes, whither it goes, and what for! All antiquity, outside of the sacred nation, failed to do that adequately. For the great minds of Greece itself landed indeed in the notion of a First Cause, which we must call God; but the notions about God were so indistinct, when they happened to be correct, that we do not know today whether the Greeks recognized in God a Personality.

* * *

BENJAMIN. We have been treated so liberally in religious and spiritual books to the sayings of Plato and his like, that we might naturally credit them with the ideas of the true God, and with true ideas of God.

ST. VICTOR. Yes, so very near; and yet how far! But, first, the Platonism which lends itself to citation in this connection is not the old genuine product of Plato and his chief character, Socrates, the same which the infidels of the Renaissance adopted as anti-Christian, saluting one another as "Brethren in Plato!" What you refer to was Neo-Platonism of Christian times, so interlarded with Christianity that some Neo-Platonic books were ascribed to St. Denis the Areopagite. However, in the second place, we have high religious thoughts propounded by Plato himself; for instance, that man's happiness consists in being like to God. Had this idea of similitude to the Godhead been insisted on, and carried out to its logical conclusions, and had God Himself therefore been conceived as a Person, there could have been instituted a genuine morality, and a code of law not unworthy of the Old Testament at least.

For, my dear Benjamin, you must bear in mind what morality is. It is the character good or bad, which our actions and therefore ourselves take on from our way of facing our Last End. This is All Good, the *summum bonum* in philosophy, God in religion. As the mind is liable to error and the will to perversity, this supreme good may be located in the wrong thing, and followed in the wrong place; it can be "envisaged" in a certain way, as you heard an Evolutionist explain how he managed to set Evolution up and put God down. And hence result the alternative movements of our growing better or worse, according as the course of our being sets to

God or away from Him. If this relation of ours to God as a Person were not there—this relation which means a divine law in His mind for our direction, a natural law in our own mind by communication,—then our actions, whatever they were like, would only take on the character of suiting us as reasonable or disfiguring us as unreasonable, of being a fit or a misfit, a mere question of *decet* or *dedecet*, of the becoming or unbecoming. But that would be only an accidental circumstance of life neither killing nor curing any body. Now the relation of our being to God is not accidental, a something taken at random or left alone, to be gambled with and "bet on," as you heard the Modernist say. He is essential to us. He is the life of the soul, *Vita vitæ nostræ*. Hence what makes for Him makes for life. What makes not for Him makes for death. People put God in the wrong thing, "*quorum deus venter est*," whose God, says the Apostle, is in their vile passions, "whose end is destruction," and meanwhile, "whose glory is in their shame." [1] Thus the act of sin is not merely a disfigurement of the mind, the reason, the soul. It kills the soul by dispossessing man of his life, which is the possession of God, *Vita vitæ nostræ*. On the other hand, a virtuous act is *vivus et vivificus*, alive and life-giving, joining us to God—from whom, says Cajetan, since God is the supreme good of the mind, no evil can ever befall reason; and to whom no evil that reason does can ever bring the soul back. That is, sin separates from God.

Hence, to conclude with Lessius who follows St. Thomas and Cajetan, if there were no Personal God with the divine law in His mind, and the communication of it by the natural law to ours, there would be no sin truly and properly deadly or mortal; but all

[1] Philip. 3. 19.

excesses and misdeeds would be only "venial"—by which word, in that connection, I suppose he means passing, temporary, incidental disorders, which man's reason would have to condone because of man's passions, God's rights being nowhere. And further we observe that, God being a Personal Creator, and not a mere blind force, the loss of Him through the death of mortal sin entails the loss of all other good things, which exist only through the personal act of His creative and sustaining power. The eternal loss or withdrawal of all created good things is involved in the eternal loss of God the Creator.

Now you see where the charm of Atheism lies, and of all kindred systems, which, if not ostensibly atheistic, are every one of them practically so. Getting God out of sight and out of mind is a free franchise to sin.

* * *

Benjamin. What did Plato mean by placing man's happiness in a likeness to God?

St. Victor. According to him there is in man a "godlike portion," or divine reason; and this is the intellectual soil in which his prudence grows. There is another reason called human, which yields the virtue of fortitude or courage. There is yet another subsoil, the sensuous element, in which temperance thrives. And justice, a fourth virtue, must be there to supervise and preside over the rest. So that the godlike life rises to the exercise of the four cardinal virtues.

This is all very excellent as far as it goes. We have the whole round of natural morality. To define this was the bent of Plato's master, Socrates, who seeing that his predecessors in philosophy had only busied themselves like scientists with nature and natural

phenomena, broke off from that line, and took to man, to human beings, human interests and things. And you see he arrived at what the Wise Man says of Wisdom, that "she teacheth temperance and prudence and justice and fortitude, which are such things as men can have nothing more profitable in this life." [1] So, in the pages of Plato, we have Socrates analysing what piety is, and impiety, what honor and turpitude are; what constitutes justice and injustice, sober-mindedness and folly, courage and cowardice; what are the merits of statesmanship and statesmen, of government and governors.

But Socrates failed to reach the kernel of the question, when treating of justice and other virtues. He made them out to be, not the product and fruit of a free will, but an expression of knowledge or wisdom; and he held that no one swerved from the line of virtue except on account of ignorance, in as much as he knew no better. The rectification of such a notion is aptly expressed by Ovid, who states that sin and vice come into possession even when the soul knows perfectly well how it stands:

> *Aliudque cupido,*
> *Mens aliud suadet; video meliora proboque,*
> *Deteriora sequor,*

"Evil desire wants one thing; my mind dictates another. I see the better thing and endorse it. And I go running after worse." Juvenal, with equal neatness, and with an accuracy worthy of the casuists, points to the genuine culprit, the free will, when he says:

> *Has patitur pœnas peccandi sola voluntas,*
> *Nam, scelus intra se tacitum qui cogitat ullum,*
> *Facti crimen habet,*

[1] Wisd. 8. 7.

"Such are the penalties which the mere will to sin must undergo. For he who entertains in the silence of his conscience the thought of a crime incurs the whole guilt of the deed."

You expressed surprise on a former occasion that a mere pagan should have formulated such correct morality.

* * *

BENJAMIN. Yes indeed, because it seems to surpass the standard of insight with some people who call themselves Christians. You observed before that many regard their interior as a reserved precinct, to which not even God has admittance.

ST. VICTOR. We might travel farther and fare worse than with those ancient pagans. But, as to the misconception of regarding ignorance only as the cause of sin, let us note the fact that, so far from always accounting for sin, or even excusing it, ignorance may be the very subject matter of the sin, its *corpus delicti*. The will purveys ignorance in the intellect, so that the latter shall not understand, or shall affect not to know: "*Noluit intelligere ut bene ageret*, He did not want to understand so as to do good;" and no wonder it followed from this affected ignorance that "the words of his mouth" were "iniquity and guile." [1] Thus the will brings the mind to be of its own way, and to resist the known truth, which is not wanted and must not be accepted as known; although, when the truth is once broached in the consciousness, there is no going back to repose in the simplicity and guiltlessness of ignorance.

Besides being often the very subject-matter of sin, ignorance in a progressive way is always a consequence of the will's sinfulness; for every sin stops up the eye of the intelligence more and more, until, as

[1] Ps. 35. 4.

Isaias says, you "call evil good and good evil," and you "put darkness for light, and light for darkness." [1] This pertains to the cumulative effects of sin—to throw a blanket over duty and truth, so that it becomes a way, a habit, a vice of the intelligence not to understand. No one so dull as he who won't understand!

But to do Socrates justice when he referred all wickedness to ignorance, we may note that all our knowledge here is so very partial and limited, as easily to be one-sided, whether maliciously or innocently so. It is only in the light of God's beatifying vision that the mind sees so adequately and clearly as to be incapable of error and sin. Aristotle speaks of its two great enemies here as oblivion and deception, that the mind forgets or mistakes. Neither is experienced in the light of the Divine Mind, when the soul shall see Him as He is.

Thus then, as I was telling you, Socrates had the credit, which Cicero rightly gives him, of having called philosophy down from heaven to earth, that is to say, from the contemplation of the skies and natural phenomena, which his predecessors in science had considered, to men themselves; introducing the spirit of research into cities and houses, requiring it to study life and morals, good and evil. In other words, he advanced from natural philosophy or science to natural ethics or moral philosophy. In this connection may be cited the commendation of Juvenal:

> 'Tis ours
> To learn and practice every useful art,
> And from high heaven deduce that better part,
> That moral sense, denied to creatures prone
> And downward bent, and found with man alone.

[1] Isai. 5. 20.

And the poet explains why these moral pursuits are so much higher than all natural research about living things, because to the brute creation the common Maker of all granted "only souls, to us spirits also, *tantum animas, nobis animum quoque*," which can manage, and organize, and govern, and civilize. Then Aristotle came, the master of them all.

* * *

Benjamin. But, as it is, what Plato conceived of our likeness to God, and what his master Socrates inculcated about the dignity of man, is all a revelation of what simple reason could see and human will essay. It serves to impart nerve and vitality in the struggle of life.

St. Victor. Only observe that with you such conceptions fit into the Christian system, which is eminently one of large insight into the due and right, and of practical efficiency in effecting the good accordingly, as well as realizing the true and the beautiful in moral action. For with us, God the Object of all is no abstraction, but the very centre and life of our life. Now do you want Aristotle?

Benjamin. That is a name to conjure by.

St. Victor. Especially when minds like those of St. Thomas and the Scholastics are the conjurors. He followed, and became the master of all his predecessors, as befitted a great man in a later generation, which was heir to all the ages gone before. With him, everything led back logically to the great First Cause, just as naturally everything had proceeded into being by the action of a great First Cause. As to man's well-being, it consists in happiness, which looms up as resulting from our energies being exercised according to nature. This balanced exercise of natural energies issues in its highest function, con-

templative thought, the thinker withdrawing himself from things external to occupy himself with the objects of his inner conceptions. There, you see, is a great world of thought. And the working of it is the divine operating in man. The Godhead with Aristotle, as far as we can make out, is to be conceived as the First Cause standing in solitary contemplation; and is Himself outside of the world, an Object of man's admiration and reverence. To know the Infinite is the highest task of man's intelligence. What man's intelligence is and can do, no one explained better than Aristotle, or even approached him in expounding. Man is superbly analysed in Aristotle's psychology; and all nature to its last causes and categories of being is dissected and defined in his metaphysics.

Taking up man's moral nature, Aristotle analysed the virtues, and disagreed with Socrates that ignorance was the explanation of wickedness. But neither does he give us a clear idea of freedom in the will, which after all is responsible for all moral evil. As incentives to moral action, Aristotle discusses on the one side our sensitive desires, which are blind, and on the other our intellect which is reflecting eternal truths. He treats of wickedness as being an incapacity to strike the mean between extremes, like cowardliness and rashness, like miserliness and prodigality. But, when all this has been said, when you have sensitive desires below, and divine light above, and a vacillating uncertainty in striking the golden mean of virtue betwixt the extremes of vice, where does the incapacity come from? What is responsible for it all? Is it necessity? It would seem to be so with Aristotle. In other words, a free will does not stand out clearly with him.

Nor does God appear endowed with free will. He

stands apart. Nor does irregularity, iniquity, sin, appear to have any relation that affects the Infinite. For the too much or too little, which constitutes iniquity and sin, are ideas belonging to a world of contingency and change. God is not in any such world; but stands the Infinite, the Immobile, the Unchangeable apart. Hence sin appears to touch Him not. He seems to be Transcendent, beyond our reach and out of our way; He seems to be Immanent, because He is the First Cause on whom all depends. We appear to have no personal relations with Him. And it is not clear whether He is a Person.

But all these drawbacks may be considered as obscurities, which one of the greatest of minds was unable to clear up and illumine. Nothing easier for us, than to fill in the vacancies of the system; to dot the "i's" and to cross the "t's;" and to thank God for having given us a Revelation which enlightens us on even the most fundamental truths of plain nature around us. We have not only the moral world of virtues mapped out for us clearly by the doctrine of revelation addressed to our faith, but we have three higher virtues still, which bring the transcendent and unfathomable God into direct and immediate relation with our mind and heart. We are instructed in the three virtues called "theological," faith, hope and charity, by which our mind and heart possess themselves of the transcendent God intimately and, if you wish to say so, "immanently," owning Him as a permanent guest in the temple of the soul.

To the Christian thus instructed by the revelation of Holy Writ, in all that is profitable for teaching, for reproof, and correction,[1] the language and conclusions of Aristotle, such as they are, speak volumes, because Christian faith and enlightenment supply

[1] 2 Tim. 3. 16.

and fill up what is wanting. Thus the great First Cause becomes a grand supplementary idea, that of God being the cause of all causes down to the most transient contingencies of the passing moment. But, without such a supplement and commentary of Christian faith, who is ever moved by a philosophical definition? Whose sentiments are likely to be touched by the idea of the great First Cause, or the Great Architect of the Universe? It is only too probable that such phrases will cloak a Deism, which gives God no providential or active part in His own world.

And so indeed it is, whether you take God as "Transcendent," or take Him as "Immanent"—words very dear to the Modernist in his code of phrases. Here is a Modernist writing on what he calls "The Christian Experience," and speaking of God as transcendent. Quoting Isaias and also Ecclesiastes for his purpose, he says: "Even among the Jews the insistence upon the Transcendence of God often resulted in nothing more than setting an infinite distance between God and His worshippers. 'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord.' 'God is in heaven and thou on earth; therefore let thy words be few.'" [1] This writer continues: "Here is a God great indeed, but 'too little for the heart'." So the Modernist has got rid of God by the way of "transcendence."

Now see him getting rid of God by the way of "immanence," which word means the abiding of God in us. You have already heard the Modernist, Loisy, going down by this road of God's "Immanence" to Pantheism; the man, said he, "who has known the ideal, under the form of the true, the good and the beautiful . . . he has entered into eternity,

[1] Eccles. 5. 1.

he has seen God face to face . . . he has written his name in characters indelible in the consciousness of the living God." There you have rank Pantheism; you become intimately part and parcel of that thing called "god"—this world all round about you—one heaving of whose consciousness is you! So the Modernist despatches himself physically and intellectually.

But now see how he despatches himself morally, and gets to Idealism, to Kantism, and what with Kant is called the "categorical imperative." Says Loisy: "For a long time back I can no longer pray to God, as one would pray to a person from whom he expected a favour. My prayer consists in recollecting myself in my conscience, to decide therein what I believe to be good and lawful." So you see God has passed out of view entirely in the management of moral life. His law is nowhere. But one's own light and law, the imperative of one's own self dictating to oneself, that is the whole round of morality. Kant called it the "categorical imperative."

* * *

Benjamin. If the Greeks themselves, as you seem to imply, emerged from the prehistoric darkness of the west, where did such great conceptions come from and the civilization which was theirs?

St. Victor. Is it not all a testimony to the vitality and virility of human powers and reason that from such crude beginnings such results should seem naturally to ensue? The Greek literature itself, and the Roman also to a degree, started from raw origins, from the "prehistoric," if you like, and yet arrived at such an exquisite body of linguistic and literary culture. Let no one say, he cannot read the world, and the signs of the times, and what is beyond all

time and place, either in the facts of the preternatural transcending nature's ordinary course of events, or in the facts as far as revealed of the supernatural surpassing all nature's powers.

Then for great elevation of thought, special men with singular gifts are never wanting, if only the opportunity arises for the seeds of thought to grow into the great oaks of science. But the eminence you have been admiring in Plato's and Aristotle's conceptions of the divine sublimity and of human elevation, was largely owing to opportunity, and notably to the sequence of many minds having travelled the same way before. That is always the story of great figures in famous periods of philosophy, theology, literature and art. They have been the highest levels to which generations reached by climbing on the backs of their predecessors. For you know that even a child can see more than a giant when mounted on the giant's shoulders. And, as all that Newton laboriously ascertained in a life-time is taken in by a school-boy now in no time, even so, as much and more than Aristotle ever ascertained is conveyed to the little Catholic child on the first page of the catechism. The long line, which that philosopher may be conceived to have capped and topped with his eminence, had submitted to be snubbed by Egypt with the remark: "You Greeks are but children." And at that price of learning humbly they had stripped Egypt of its spoils, just as Moses had been vastly more cultured still in all the learning of the Egyptians. With Egypt between, Greece must have come into contact with the sacred deposit of revelation among the Jews. The wisdom which had been gathered by the travelling scholars was encased by poets and tragedians in immortal verse. The people listened and learnt in front of the stage. Professional philosophers added

the results of their investigations. Minds rose in an ascending series, one on top of the other. The doctrine about God figured everywhere. You have seen how far it reached, and where it fell short.

* * *

BENJAMIN. The morality of these people came to very little. We know something of the license practised under the cloak of superstition and the deification of vice.

ST. VICTOR. What can you expect? No one preached the Divine Word to them. We have Our Lord's commendation on the men of such generations, that, when they had the chance, they did penance and came to God. He says of the Ninivites, "they did penance at the preaching of Jonas." [1] But the farther they went from the original fund and patriarchal deposit of history and tradition, the worse they fared, whether they were "prehistoric" or historic. There is a theorem in logic that, if you sheer off just a little from the line of truth, as at any parting of the ways, then when you go far enough you are farther away ten thousand times as much—particularly if a few thousands of years have come in to mature the process. To these people there hung on bits and relics and remnants of the original truth, moral sense and history of our race, as you feel at every turn in their mythologies, ceremonies, deities; and students catalogue these remnants in the comparative study of religions. It was a general intellectual and moral outfit of rags and tatters with respect to religion and morality; and reason and fancy had taken it on themselves to patch things up again.

But really, between ourselves, which is worse? On the one hand, to have come from generations

[1] Matt. 12. 41.

which had wandered away from the sources of light and truth, and then to be affirming many gods, and dealing with many devils; or to be squarely in the heyday of Christianity, and to be openly denying God, as if He were a myth, and to be affecting to ignore the devil, as if he were another myth, while he is riding on their backs! In the former case, that of the pagans, you have what Our Lord described as tolerating the devil and despising ignorantly the true God; and it will come to this that, if any one preaches, they will change their mind, be converted to penance, hate the devil and love God. But in the latter case of the Materialist, Idealist or Modernist, with whom in the full blaze of Christianity God must pass as not known and the devil as incognito, one thing is clear that the profession of ignorance invites the devil to ride on the back of the soul gratis; for the rider is not supposed to be known or felt. His Satanic Majesty never had such a chance. Spiritism with its superstitions shows it. And spiritism, with all the other superstitions, infests the haunts of irreligion, which has the assurance then to speak of religion and Christianity as a "failure." So may the black pot or kettle speak of white wool or snow as utter failures.

The highest amount of morality visible in philosophical teaching was that of the Stoics, a sect which arose soon after Aristotle. Their whole view of the world was cast in the thought of the divine being, who generated all finite things from Himself, and included them all in Himself; who penetrated them with His power, ruled them with His unchangeable law, and thus manifested Himself in them all. The Stoic system being fundamentally religious, there was scarcely an important statement in it which was not connected with their doctrine about God. All moral duties rested, as they must do, on a religious

ground; all virtuous actions were but a fulfilment of the divine will and law. That is correct, if we consider that the divine will and eternal law are manifested in the human conscience by the natural law written there. But with the Stoics what did this "divinity" and its law come to? It is but a name for an absolute system of necessity governing the material world. And the conception of morality, in the fulfilment of the divine will and law, was that of a "life according to nature." But it so happens that not only virtues can claim "Nature" for their guide and mother. Vices too can claim her for their stepmother. I quoted for you once Pope's satire on the idea, which every spark and libertine gives expression to, that what is natural must be right; that vice must be the equivalent of virtue, for vice is in the appetite, and the appetite is in nature, and therefore it is all right; that error must be truth, because it is in the intelligence, and the intelligence is in nature, and therefore it cannot be false. And so on with other applications of the fallacy. But says the poet,

> What Nature wants (a phrase I much distrust)
> Extends to luxury, extends to lust;

as Aristotle showed so excellently by his doctrine of the golden mean, in which alone virtue is found. Is not a man's judgment in nature and natural to him? But it is not therefore right. Thus Dryden in his *Religio Laici* says of private judgment, and the thousand contradictory errors which it festers with, when applied to the Sacred Scriptures:

> The fly-blown text creates a crawling brood,
> And turns to maggots what was meant for food;
> A thousand daily sects rise up and die.
> A thousand more the perish'd race supply.
> So all we make of Heaven's discovered will
> Is not to have it, or to use it ill.

"Not to have it." Affected ignorance! "Or to use it ill." Abusive wilfulness! There is something more than mere "Nature" here, something that frustrates it, and frustrates even the designs of Heaven above. There is free will, to which Nature always exposes a weak side, that she can be taken the wrong way, out of proper time, place and circumstance, out of weight, number and measure, out of mode, species and order. And therefore does that same Nature not only clamour for protection, but provides it by a moral law of conscience in man, which traces the bounds for his free will that it shall not run out into abuse.

To leave this paganism where it reached its highest level of moral doctrine, take some beautiful thoughts which can easily be improved into Christian truth. Cleanthes the Stoic sings thus in his verse:

Zeus, originator of nature, governing all things by law,
Thee does the whole world obey, as it revolves about the earth,
Obey where thou leadest, submit willingly to be controlled by thee.
The wandering elements thou knowest how to put in place.
The unseemly thou adornest, and what is perverse is not perverse to thee.
For thus hast thou harmonized all things in unity, good and bad,
So that from all should issue one word, abiding for ever.

You may notice here something of that lyric vein in which St. John of the Cross excels. But the solemnity of this pagan hymn is remote from the festive gaiety of the Christian mystic.

It was always conceived that the poetic form of language suited such thoughts best; that poetry and music lend themselves more aptly to the truths of divine contemplation. For the vulgar language, begot in the street and the market and the forum, has not a form sufficiently distinguished to attempt the

beauty of sublime truths, and therefore must acquire for spiritual and divine things an atmospheric purity of expression.

* * *

BENJAMIN. You seem to be a world away from the primitive peoples whom I thought you were speaking of. It was a question of comparative religions. And I was thinking of Hottentots and the like. But here you are among the learned Greeks.

ST. VICTOR. You are right up against them, shoulder to shoulder with your primitives!

BENJAMIN. What do you mean?

ST. VICTOR. Your modern primitives, all round about you. What is the difference between your primitives and your primitives, of those times and these times and the times between? Are they not all one, or, as St. Paul said more accurately to the Athenians, are they not all from one? They eat the same bread, walk the same earth, contemplate the same heaven; and, if any snob imagines he is not like the rest of men, wait till he is in the cold ground, and see whether what is left of him is much more than what is left of the cave-men! What interests people in the cave-men, and such like "prehistoric" characters, is the fact that they scratched rocks and left the marks there, that they trimmed tools of stone and left them even till our day, that they heaped up a lot of rubbish about their lake-dwellings, and there we find them! To suit Evolution, it is inferred that men who did these wonderful things, and left them behind, must have been unable to do anything else. They must have been very low, just links betwixt an evolutionary monkey origin of man and the man who publishes a newspaper or flies an aeroplane.

But did not millions of men do these very same things in the late war? They lived in dugouts, and

probably scratched the walls; they improvised tools, and may even have trimmed stones; they left lots of heaps behind them wherever they stayed for six months or a year. So we are back in the prehistoric "stone age"!

But, to be serious, whether the primitives come down to us as cave-men or Hottentots, as sun worshippers or Buddha worshippers, as favouring the Greek Zeus of Olympus or the Roman Jupiter of the Capitol, you have seen the highest outcome of their religious thought and morality. While people were so constructive, and built up their social and civil polity from the low level of a prehistoric and submerged past, their notions and rites of worship were religious indeed, but as being misconceived, misapplied and degrading, they were quite pagan out of the fund of superstition. Superstition is the worship of the true God in the wrong way, or the worship of a false god in any way. The great schools of thought, in philosophy, morality and religion, despised the vulgar superstitions; but they themselves, with their purified vision, became to their generations what they are to us in the pages of history, mere dissenting sects, each with its own following, all agreeing to differ, finding occupation in doing so, and remaining content with that. They showed in what they did and in what they did not do, in the fluttering of their aspirations and in the helplessness with which they sank back to earth, how immeasurably Christian excellence in philosophy, the family and State, soared above them; how infinitely attractive the Christian truth was; and how potent, that it should not only win approval, yea, excite desire, but could work such a mass of decayed humanity, should leaven and transform it, until the bulk of it became Christian.

* * *

BENJAMIN. Did they never improve the tenets of their schools, so that their constructive genius, of which you make so much, showed itself in morality and religion no less than in literature and polity?

ST. VICTOR. Oh, yes! they improved, by becoming Christian; or, if they did not do that, by poaching on Christian preserves. In either case they merely came back, by fair means or foul, to what the original heritage of the human race contained or promised.

BENJAMIN. Poaching on Christian preserves!

ST. VICTOR. Of course, Christianity is no preserve. Every child of Adam has a perfect franchise and a duty to enter on it as his heritage. It is the light of the world. It is the salt of the earth. It is the Kingdom of God. But, if any one will not enter by the open gate, he will steal into the premises and steal things out of them. We have that kind of poaching going on at all times.—The darksome caves from which the prehistoric men emerged have always been fancied and haunted by some people. In the face of Christendom there have always been plenty of people to say: Behold us! We have never accepted you! Meanwhile they use all the lights, literature and civilization of Christianity. They only show, besides the reality of free will, that all the latest and newest errors are as old as mankind. The same light which serves to approach Christianity, can serve to crawl backwards, turn round, and leave Christian truth.

BENJAMIN. Going up the hill and coming down!

ST. VICTOR. They remind us of what Sacchini relates concerning the New World and the Spanish adventurers; that commonly the father came in as an adventurous free-lance having nothing to his account; that the son became a millionaire; and the grandson, a pauper. For the people of the jaded, sickened, decrepit Roman civilization, the advent of

Christianity was a vision, an horizon at dawn revealing a paradise before them, though it should have to be reached through blood and death. So, too, with the fresher nations of the North, not yet corrupted by contact with civilizations effete. For all these the ark of Christianity was the only thing which floated when all else that makes life worth living was submerged. It is only their descendants, those who are born with the silver spoon in their mouths, that affect a squeamish appetite, become so delicate and critical; and whereas a father had been a pagan, and the son had become a Christian, the grandson shows his exquisite taste by becoming a renegade.

You have a perfect antithesis here, as you intimate by what you say: Going up the hill, and then going down again. First, there was the expectation, and yearning, and palpitation of the heart of humanity for something better which all things spoke of as promised and due to arrive. You have the agitation of all humanity, pagan as well as Jewish, portrayed dramatically in that scene of the liturgy, on the first Sunday of Advent, when Israel comes forth saying: "Looking out afar, behold I see the power of God coming, and a cloud covering all the earth: Go ye, meet Him, and say, Tell us if Thou art he, who is to reign over Israel? Ye earth-born, ye children born of men, rich and poor all together, go ye out to Him and say: Thou who rulest Israel, thou who shepherdest Joseph, tell us if Thou art he? Lift up your gates, ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O gates of eternity, and the King of glory shall enter in—Thou who art to rule over Thy people Israel. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost!" Over against this you have the palinode of the renegade, which is chanted in a hundred ways, whereof Isaias says protesting: "Hear, O ye heavens, and

give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken. I have brought up children and exalted them, but they have despised me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel hath not known me, and my people hath not understood." [1]

He proceeds to that hymn of the nations saluting the advent of Christianity. "Many peoples shall go and say: Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob, and He will teach us His ways and we will walk in His paths; for the law shall come forth from Sion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge the gentiles, and rebuke many peoples." [2]

[1] Isai. 1.2, 3. [2] *Ibid.* 2. 3, 4.

Chapter XXII

DEFINITIONS AND NOTIONS

Benjamin. So you land religion and faith in law?

St. Victor. That will suit you, will it not? Moses began his great canticle of benediction on the people of Israel by blessing the God of Israel for having given them a law: "In His right hand a fiery law; He hath loved His people." [1] It is the unique privilege of man to be directed, and to direct himself accordingly, to receive the law and to observe it, to enjoy the privilege of guidance and to make the return of obedience. In matters of truth and morality this guidance is already written from everlasting in the divine law of the eternal mind; and it is communicated by natural light as a law to the mirror of man's mind in time. Even things inferior to man are governed by law; but they are fixed by it. Man fixes himself according to his law. Common sense agrees here with the Psalmist in considering it a blessing of natural providence that God has not left man without the witness of a divine law presented for his acceptance: "The Lord is sweet and righteous; therefore He will give a law to sinners in the way. He will guide the mild in judgment; He will teach the meek His ways." [2]

In this sense, those pagan philosophers whom I stigmatized as poachers on Christianity may be understood to endorse and appraise the sanctity and blessedness of law. Seneca says: "We are born in a kingdom; to obey God is freedom." Epictetus puts

[1] Deut. 33. 2. [2] Ps. 24. 8, 9.

it thus: "Dare to look up to God and say, Use me in future for what Thou wilt. I am of the same mind with Thee. I am Thine. I repine at none of Thy decrees. Lead where Thou wilt." And the philosopher probes the very quick of the question when he says of the direction, line, guidance which men follow, that it is the only thing of consequence amid the bagatelles of life; for it is the game we play, not the things we play with, that makes for happiness or misery. Says Epictetus: As children play with oyster-shells, caring little about the shells, but much about the game, so let your philosopher, the ideal Cynic, care nothing about the subject-matter which he deals with in life, but ever so much about the game, and his conduct therein. Then, he exclaims, what tyrants, what guards or swords of theirs will cause him a flutter of fear!

This sounds like the fundamental consideration of Christian asceticism, or the *Spiritual Exercises* on the use of creatures. And it is all a commentary on what man is made for, the necessity of reaching it, and the way of doing it, by the observance of divine and natural law. As no man is a democrat before God, he must take life on the terms on which it is offered, given and received. You know what the democratic principle is?

BENJAMIN. At least it means no autocracy.

ST. VICTOR. Some one has just said that it means much more than that. He says, the democratic principle consists in a "refusal to submit to any non-elected authority, religious or political." According to this view, since so many have not elected God to be the religious authority over them in heaven, and do not accord Him the power to institute any delegated authority on earth, it would follow that they may go their way through life without honouring or

obeying either God or His Church. As one refined conscience put it recently, on the subject of making some profession in matter of religion, that "it hurt his conscience," quoth he, so a great many fine persons' consciences would actually be hurt, if they acknowledged and gave honour to God. But don't you see the very essence of religion is the profession of inferiority and submission and obedience to His will and law? It is the first attitude which the creature takes up towards God, and it abides as the last throughout all existence—if unwillingly, so much the worse for the unwilling, irreligious or infidel subject. How did you define religion before?

* * *

Benjamin. We agreed that it was the virtue which has the honour of God for its object, worshipping Him with correct doctrine about Him in the mind, and with proper acts commanded by the will.

St. Victor. What we heard of the primitive religions, and the residue of original worship found to be extant among them, furnishes an excellent directive guide in discerning the essentials of religion. There are all those manifestations of submission and homage to the Divine Majesty which are implied in the prayer of adoration, in that of thanksgiving, in the prayer also of petition, which goes most commonly by the simple name of prayer, and in that of satisfaction for shortcomings and sin. This last kind of prayer is identified largely with its chief act, that of sacrifice and oblation under any form of reconciliation and making peace with God. The spirit of worship inclining the will to give God His honour due, inclines it also to control everything else that is in man, directing all to the same purpose: "Whether you eat or drink or whatever else you do, do all to the

glory of God." [1] This is the complete idea of religion.

BENJAMIN. You seem to bring all knowledge and virtue under the surveillance and command of religion.

ST. VICTOR. Yes, whatever the mind knows can be directed to the worship and honour of God; notably all knowledge of the truth about Him. All the ways of acquiring that truth can be directed to His worship; especially the exercise of faith in God's word, when He speaks. The acceptance of divine revelation is the first step to all else in religion; for if you believe not God to whom shall you go? "Lord, Thou hast the words of eternal life." [2] Then, for this faith and for all its works in virtue, without which faith is dead, the same spirit of religion ordains the acceptance of divine institutions, that is, the Church and her Sacraments, and all that her authority ordains, in ordinances, rites and liturgy generally. Not only any act which we perform can be directed to God's honour as an exercise of worship, but any and all the virtues, intellectual in the mind, or moral in the will itself, can be controlled and employed the same way. This we have just noted in the matter of faith, which is an intellectual exercise of activity, in act and permanent habit. The same we see in the works of mercy, which are moral acts of the will proceeding from their respective habits or virtues—liberality, humility, charity, and the like. So St. James calls these controlled virtues by the simple name of religion, saying: "Religion clean and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless in their tribulations, and to keep one's self unspotted from the world." [3]

* * *

[1] 1 Cor. 10. 31. [2] John 6. 69. [3] James 1. 27.

Benjamin. What does Wordsworth mean when he says:

> You must love Him ere to you
> He will seem worthy of your love?

It sounds as if we must set God up some way by dint of loving Him, and then find that He was worth it because we had set Him up.

St. Victor. What does he mean? I don't know. He might possibly be using the word, love, in Our Lord's sense, for keeping the Commandments: "If any man love Me, he will keep My words." [1] So understood, the principle is true that consistency of moral action and fidelity to the law heighten the mental appreciation of God, and warm the moral sentiment of love for Him. But clearly you must begin by knowing Him sufficiently to understand the obligation of obeying His commandments and doing His will.

If that be not the meaning of the poet's lines, he would seem to anticipate our Modernists, who would have us go out of ourselves into the blind Unknown beyond us, and find something there that transcends ourselves, and lash ourselves into a "passion" for it; and then, say they, it "becomes God" to us. Listen to this proser, who propounds religion as something like the blind process of a sunflower, without giving us any sun for the flower to turn to. He says: "We must have a passion to draw us to the future, as a sunflower is drawn to the sun. . . . We are lonely in this world, unless we are aware of God. . . . I use the word God, because it is the word commonly used for that which transcends ourselves, and of the reality of which we become aware through our own passion. If the word, God, is too much soiled with

[1] John 14 21, 23.

misuse, another should be found; but, as it is not yet found, one must say, God." There is a specimen of religious profanity!

Since this Modernist does not want either the word, God, or the Person Himself of the Divinity, let us confront his audacity at once with the strict and plain notions of both the word and the Person signified by it. St. Thomas says, in his article inquiring whether sacrifice existed under the Natural Law: "I answer, that natural reason dictates to man his subjection to a higher being, on account of the deficiencies which he feels in himself, wherein he has need of being helped and directed by some one above him. And, whatever that is, it is what with all people is named God."

* * *

Benjamin. How simple and perspicuous that is to start with!

St. Victor. But a Protestant divine of great note, Schleiermacher, circumscribes his definition of religion with that; as if such a preliminary apprehension of religion were the beginning, middle and end of it. For he defines religion as the feeling of dependence on a high power. But that is only opening one's eyes to a God; it is not the discharge of any duty towards Him. This divine has left out the intellectual part of religion, which is learning to know God; and, if the "feeling" of dependence means only a sentiment, then he has omitted the main action in the virtue of religion, that of the moral will addressing itself to the honour and service of God: "*Mihi autem adhaerere Deo bonum est*, It is good for me to stick close to my God, to put my hope in the Lord God." [1] When we speak of religion, says St. Augustine, we

[1] Ps. 72. 28.

speak of worshipping and understanding God, "*de colendo et intelligendo Deo agitur.*" Hence comes an accepted definition, that it is the manner of knowing and worshipping God. Feeling or sentiment in the business is neither here nor there, no more than Shakespeare's "sound and fury, signifying nothing."

Matthew Arnold, a literary man, expressed in his way the same idea as that of Schleiermacher. Deriving, he said, his notion from "human thought and human language," he opined that religion is "ethics heightened, enkindled, lighted up by feeling." Morality, he said, becomes religion, "when to morality is applied emotion." Arnold was only a literary man. But his pronouncement on religion has become a kind of doctrine to swear by. His definition helps you to understand why all religion is now dubbed "romantic," and why W. A. Phillips, for instance, in his *Modern Europe* of the nineteenth century, distinguishes that age into the "romantic" or conservative, and the "liberal" or progressive. He sums up the "'romantic' movement" of the age thus: "Its religious side is represented by the wave of Catholic revival which spread throughout Western Europe, and which is not yet spent. The Ultramontane movement in France and Germany, 'Tractarianism' in England, the orthodox revival in the Lutheran churches, are all but variations of a common tendency, of which the outward and visible sign was the reconstruction, in September, 1814, of the Order of Jesus by Pius VII., a fact as momentous and significant as the foundation of the same Order in the sixteenth century." According to this romancer then, if you want to see the embodiment of religion as a romance, look at the Jesuits! But, seriously, all this emotionalism which is to constitute religion is only the old Pietism, which by way

of reaction against the notions of mere Intellectualism and Rationalism would have nothing to do with religious knowledge, but dealt only with religious feeling. We have seen Methodism and other religious ventures float largely on such excitability and sentimentalism.

That Modernist, whose utterances took your breath away, has of course bushels of views on what he calls "religion." He was employed week after week by a great organ of publicity in England to instruct the teachers of the country on the subject which his title expressed: "Religious Teaching." He was only a layman; and I believe an artist. It showed how much the great publication knew or cared about religion to have had the matter turned inside out and upside down, as the following briefest specimens show: Religion, says he, is an "experience," it is a "passion," which you must fly into, before you know what is the matter; then you will get "religion." "It is" he says, "all high disinterested passion; and the Christian doctrine now should be that every disinterested passion is love that leads to the knowledge of God; and, further, that men must refuse no disinterested passion, that they must not content themselves with morals, or with the idea of pleasing God by obeying His rules. God, no more than the sun, makes rules." Elsewhere he says, that to experience "noble passions" on seeing a sunset, or a mother with her child, or some noble action, "and to think and act in terms of them—that is religion . . . an experience mainly emotional, which cannot be expressed in merely intellectual terms." And so Modernism reeled off its reams, week after week, on the subject of "Religious Teaching."

The same school has produced other definitions of religion. Here is a negative one, showing what

religion is not, according to Modernism. Says one, it is idolatry to know what you are worshipping. Idolatry was wrong, he says, because it had fixed ideas about supernal things. Christianity so far has been wrong, because it has pretended to have such knowledge about God as we have of persons, places and things. And, explaining farther this process of knowing nothing fixed, or as the word is, "final," of going whirling in a merry-go-round of opinions, and reaching what "is always and necessarily incomplete and in fulness unattainable," he says dogmatically that then, indeed, we shall have something "better and more satisfying than ascertained knowledge." That is to say, you never know what you know, whether God exists or not, whether He gave laws or not, whether you have anything to do with Him or not. You see, says one, "life is coming back very quickly into religion;" and this life "is like new wine in old bottles, for it is a new conviction struggling to express itself in old formulae," like the Apostles' Creed. "So," he continues, "men find that they have the same conviction when their formulae are different." That is, the thousand Protestant sects, which are all contradicting one another somewhere though they may have kept the same Christian Creeds, are all really meaning the same thing; and of course, Moslemism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Fetichism, likewise.

One says gravely: "We have entered upon a new period of creative religion, all the more creative because it is not consciously religious." What such a man means, it is wasting time to inquire.—Well, have you had enough?

* * *

Benjamin. The smallest particle of such stuff is more than enough. But, if there is any reason for

tolerating that, there must be for putting up with all.

ST. VICTOR. Oh, that is more than I pretend to do. But I just mention that some one lately has given a definition of poetry, in these words, that it is "an interpretation of life in terms of emotion." Now you see from the foregoing how they have brought religion down to poetry.

Another has attempted to trick it out in terms of literature. He says that "the universal in literature" is religion. What is that? Such natural, universal sentiments, expressed by writers, as touch a common chord in all mankind—that is religion.

A literary review defines God as the "It" or "That behind phenomena." The writer here says: "The great question at the root of all religion is whether That-which-is-behind-phenomena cares for men, cares, that is, not only for their comfort, but for the values—justice, goodness, beauty—which men in their societies recognize as things of supreme worth." So, according to this scribbler, we are trying to find out by what he calls religion, whether God has any notion of justice, goodness, beauty, such as men have; and whether He rises to their level.

An American says: "Religion to most men now means the stimulation of life in the direction of goodness, by an emphasis on 'ultimates;'" and he adds condescendingly, whether you call it mystical, ethical or intellectual, "it is in any case an integral part of life."

BENJAMIN. What does he mean by "ultimates?"

ST. VICTOR. Oh, I suppose the same as the usual cant of "the Good, the Beautiful and the True;" or of the "values." Listen to this: Religion is "Faith in the conservation of values." What are those things, you ask? Here is the answer: "The three great spiritual values are . . . the Good, the True

and the Beautiful." And so, continues another, religion is found in one's "own deepest self," in "the meanings and values created by the needs of the human spirit;" which "are their own proofs." Don't ask for definition, demonstration or sense.

Now you are qualified to listen to Dr. Sanday of Oxford, who does allow, that there is some reality somewhere, "some kind of reality," says he, "that is beyond human reality, and superior to it; which is moreover inexpressible, save with symbolic vagueness;" that is to say, in the terms of this Doctor's Modern Church, that all we have in the Bible, the Gospels, Revelation and religion, is "symbolism" and "myth," to be interpreted as you like. You may contradict one another to your heart's content, using the very same words of the Bible, and the same formularies of the Creeds.

* * *

Benjamin. I don't know what to think of all this, or where to place it. Where did you get it all from?

St. Victor. From the weekly, monthly, yearly publications or books, supposed to be quite respectable, and quite representative, though I should be sorry to mention their names in too close conjunction with their contents and products. It would not be kind.

Benjamin. No! I ask, what is the source of such aberrations?

St. Victor. Oh! perhaps Japan; which, far removed from the influences of the faith once preached by St. Francis Xavier, is now converting Europe to its own gods. You know from the acts of so many martyrs in Japan that the Dutch and English merchants stood sponsors for Japan's rejection of Christianity, and, as far as could be, for the apostasy of

those already converted; and every one of those Dutch and English approved himself to the Japanese by trampling on the Cross for which the martyrs died. Now, I say, it looks as if the Japanese were taking their revenge; for divers books are being produced in English by authors of that nationality. Listen to this of M. Sugimori, a Japanese, who has just published in English a book on *The Principles of the Moral Empire*. "First," says he, "I believe in the god that I ought to become; secondly, I believe in the god by means of whom I can become the god I ought to become;" and then he continues in the same line of thought: "Are not nations gods on their own account? Are not classes another set of gods also on their own account?" And it is with quite an appetite and zest that the press picks up and masticates the Japanese. In fact, we find a grave Englishman propounding in his own name, that man's life "can be explained only in the terms of what he is trying to become," and "religion is his effort to make this purpose clearer to himself." As God does not appear in the working out of this problem, but Evolution would do the writer just as well, it is clear that he comes up to about the level of the Japanese. And, since all this "becoming" is a fabric of the German philosophical shops, you see the Japanese is improving on the Germans.

For, my dear Benjamin, with Fichte there was still reason somewhere in the background. With Schopenhauer there was an ultimate ground of the world somewhere in will. With Büchner, it all became brute matter and brutish matter. With Hegel everything evaporated in an idea. By Spencer we became heirs to the Unknown and Unknowable. Now another Englishman makes all the world an Imagination, saying seriously, that it is "in a pre-

eminent sense Divine Imagining; the Cosmic Imagination lives conservatively in the ocean of the Infinite, and creatively in the storms of time." He quotes Dr. Schiller for the way creation came about; it was in "the corruption of eternity."

On our subject of religion, a Scotsman who affects poetry puts it thus: "All the World is in your brain, Worship it!"

Now let me release you definitively, and you may go back to your own regions of judgment, reason and good sense.

* * *

Benjamin. As often as I have been among men, says Thomas à Kempis quoting Seneca, so often have I returned less of a man. Does it not make one feel lonely and alone to have come into contact with such generations?

St. Victor. Yet never less alone than when alone with the truth and the faith.

Benjamin. In a recent letter upon a subject kindred to ours, some one writes that Euripides, recognizing how there is no union between light and darkness, makes his Hippolytus bid the chaste Diana withdraw:

> Farewell, farewell, most blessed,
> Lift thee clear
> Of soiling men!

St. Victor. Not so with us! We bid Wisdom come, and make a chaste generation beautiful in glory. Give me Wisdom that sitteth by Thy throne, and cast me not off from amongst Thy children! Send her out of Thy holy heaven, and from the throne of Thy Majesty, that she may be with me and may labour with me! For, if any one be perfect

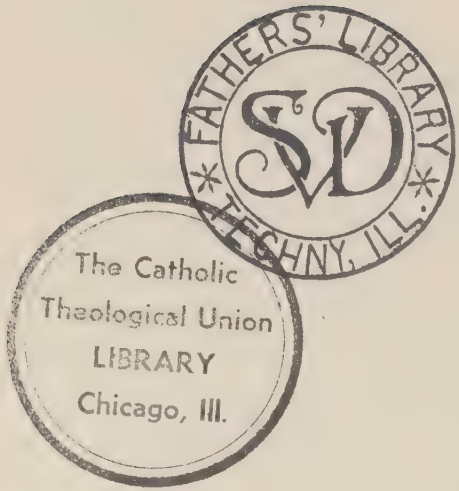
among the children of men, yet if Thy wisdom be not with him, he shall be nowise regarded.[1]

Have you noticed a striking contrast between two scenes, one following the other in the Book of Proverbs? The first scene ends with these words: "Her house is the way to hell, reaching even to the inner chambers of death." The second scene begins then with Wisdom crying aloud, standing at the top of the high places in the way, and bidding all to come; she has built herself a house, and she has mingled her wine, and set forth her table, inviting the little ones and the unwise to come: "Come eat my bread, and drink the wine which I have mingled for you!"[2]

For, indeed, the law of the Lord which is Wisdom is lightsome, enlightening the eyes. It is immaculate, converting souls. It is faithful in its promises, giving wisdom to little ones. It is right and rejoiceth the heart. It is holy, abiding for ever and justified in itself, for it applies to all places, times, and particulars; becoming thus for the happiness of man more desirable than gold and brilliants, sweeter than honey and the honey-comb.[3]

[1] WIsd. 4. 1; 9. 4, 6, 10. [2] Prov., ch. 8 and 9. [3] Ps. 18. 8–11.

The End


FATHERS' LIBRARY
TECHNY, ILL.
The Catholic
Theological Union
LIBRARY
Chicago, Ill.

INDEX

Abelard, 173, *seq*
Adam of St. Victor, 181
Æstheticism, 300
Agnosticism, 114, 117, 123, 124, 217, 218, 241, 288, 300, 313, 325, 355, *seq.*
Allen, Grant, 297, 311, 312
Ambrose, *St.*, 69, 124, 136, 178, 179, 282
Anselm, *St.*, 173, *seq.*, 189, 199
Anthropomorphism, 30, 31, 141, 332
Antinomians, 353
Areopagites, 110
Aristotle, 77, 103, 177, 321, 379, *seq.*, 387
Atheism, 300, 311, 326, 375
Augustine, *St.*, 29, 50, 61, 65, 69, 96, 99, 111, 136, 175, 182, 244, 245, 249, 278, 284, 347, 357, 399

Bad faith, 344,, *seq.* 355, *seq.*
Bede, *Venerable*, 116
Bellarmine, 60, 90, 271
Bernard, *St.*, 81
Bernardine, *St.*, 154
Bonaventure, *St.*, 77
Büchner, 333, 405

Cæcilia, *St.*, 258
Cajetan, 212, 214, 374
Catullus, 249
Carlyle, 295
Causality, 150, 158, 159, 164, 166
Chrysostom, *St.*, 61, 72, 284
Cicero, 18, 19
Claudian, 67, 252
Claver, *St.* Peter, 238
Comte, 325
Conventionalism, 175
Credulity, 175, 176
Creed, 176, 190, 313
Creed, Athanasian, 334, 335
Cyril, *St.*, 342

Darwinism, 217, 311, *seq.*, 334
Deism, 300, 382

Empedocles, 88
Epictetus, 84, 394, 395
Epicurus, 43
Ethics, 160, 330, 331
Evolutionism, 141, 197, 215, 217, 306, *seq.*, 311, *seq.*, 327, 371, 389
Expediency, 161

Faith, 174, *seq.*, 180, *seq.*, 210, *seq.*, 397
Feuerbach, 331
Fichte, 146, 405
Francis de Sales, *St.*, 223, 249, 266
Fraser, *Sir* James, 323

Gnosticism, 314, 350, 352, *seq.*, 364
Gregory, *St.*, 54, 178

Haeckel, 334
Heathenism, 300, 325, *seq.*
Hegel, 405
Heresy, 349, *seq.*
History, 177
Hugh of St. Victor, 50, 78, 115, 181, 229 265, 279
Humanism 126
Huxley and others, 297, 313

Idealism 6, 86, 103, 122, *seq.* 151, 156, 163, 331, 383, 386
Ignatius, *St.*, 55, 254
Immortality, 306
Indifferentism, 133, 204, 328, *seq.*, 342
Isis, Osiris, 120

Jansenism, 168, 307
Jerome, *St.*, 60, 65, 77, 128, 315, 340
John of the Cross, *St.*, 289, 388
Justinian, *St.* Lawrence, 232
Juvenal, 109, 202, 376, 378

Kantism, 383
Kelvin, *Lord*, 137, 316, *seq.*

Lessing, 114, 350
Lessius, 87, 374
Liebig, 316
Lodge, *Sir* Oliver, 318
Loss, eternal, 375
Lucretius, 102, 310, 311
Luther, 348

Magdalen, Mary, 168, 187
Manicheeism, 111, 353, *seq.*, 364
Materialism, 154, 311, 306, 331, *seq.*, 364, 386
Mentality, 152, 169, *seq.*
Metaphysics, 163, 164, 166
Modernism, 123, 127, 147, 152, 192, *seq.*, 215, 218, 246, *seq.*, 258, 271, *seq.*, 275, *seq.*, 290, 291, 302, *seq.*, 322, 326, 332, 355, 356, 364, 382, *seq.*, 398, *seq.*
Morality, 104, 160, 168, 330, 331, 373
Mysticism, 29, 124, 178, 218, 219

Naturalism, 296, *seq.*, 325
Nuns, 336, 337

Origins, historical, 167
Ovid, 376

Pantheism, 30, 126, 127, 151, 308, 311
Pasteur, 137
Pedagogy, 148
Pharisaism, 13, 34, 239, 283
Pietism, 400
Platonism, 123, 127, 341, 356, 373, *seq.*
Positivism, 117, 123, 126, 300, 313, 325
Pragmatism, 142, 156, *seq.*
Prayer, 3, *seq.*, 366, *seq.*
Probabilities, 348

Rationalism, 173, 183, *seq.*, 296, *seq.*, 401
Relativity, 113, 132, *seq.*, 149, 152, *seq.*, 290
Religion, 7, *seq.*, 82, 190, *seq.*, 209, *seq.*, 365, *seq.*
Revelation, 185, 381
Richard of St. Victor, 49, 50, 85
Romanticism, 29, 175, 218, 300, 400
Ruysbroeck, 49

Sadduceeism, 283, 287
Sanday, *Dr.*, 277, 404
Scepticism, 5, 123, 127, 156, 197, 300, 311
Schleiermacher, 259, 399, 400
Schopenhauer, 145, 405
Schultze, 188
Secularism, 330, *seq.*
Seneca, 83, 197, 394, 406
Shakespeare, 128, 177, 251, 253
Sin, 196, 374
Socrates, 43, 142, 143, 373, 375, *seq.*
Spencer, Herbert 124, 176, 190, 198, 215, 405
Spiritism, 330, 386
Stoicism, 84, 341, 386, *seq.*

Tacitus, 245
Theodulph, 232
Thackeray, 115, 124
Theodoret, 175
Thomas Aquinas, *St.*, 50, 77, 120, 321, 374, 399
Traditionalism, 175
Truth of Life, 7, 78, 104, 107, 160
Tyndall, *Dr.*, 117, 288, 313

Unity of Species, 370

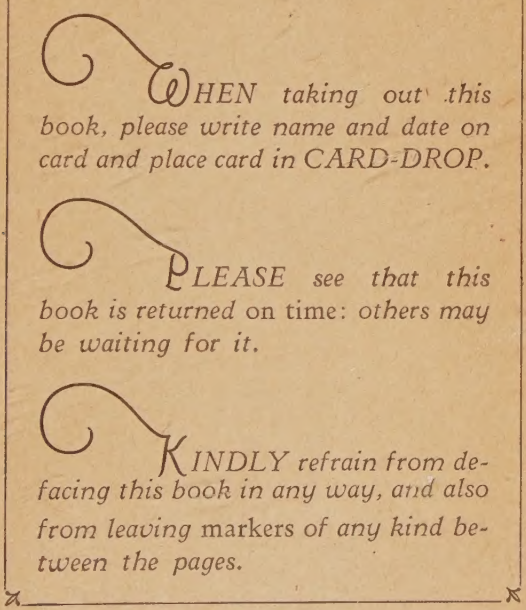
Xavier, *St.* Francis, 155, 237

CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL UNION
BX1754.H8 C001
TALKS ON TRUTH FOR TEACHERS AND THINKERS
3 0311 00043 4287

55450

WITHDRAWN

BX
1754
.H8 55450
AUTHOR Hughes, Thomas Aloysius.
TITLE TALKS ON TRUTH FOR TEACHERS
AND THINKERS


WHEN taking out this book, please write name and date on card and place card in CARD-DROP.
PLEASE see that this book is returned on time: others may be waiting for it.
KINDLY refrain from defacing this book in any way, and also from leaving markers of any kind between the pages.

3 0311